THE TESTIMONY OF THE WITNESSES

A DEVOTIONAL AND HOMILETICAL EXPOSITION

OF

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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"Ye shall be my witnesses both (1) in Jerusalem, and (2) in all Judea and Samaria, and (3) to the uttermost part of the earth."—*Acts* 1 8

PREFACE

A comprehensive survey of the contents of the Acts of the Apostles would probably raise the question, Is not the title of the book a misnomer? It is not difficult to find some justification for calling it the Acts of Peter, John and Paul. but, where nine of the original twelve are mentioned by name but once, and in a general and collective way in but two or three other places, one can hardly accept the common title as the most fitting designation of the entire book. And we are glad to believe that the name is not inspired

We may find a more appropriate name for the work, if we note the fact that Luke's plan seems to cover the teachings as well as the doings of these founders and propagators of the new faith He evidently follows, in a general way, the program outlined by our Lord in the eighth verse of the first chapter,—"Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" But an undeviating adherence to this scheme was not in his thought And so we have the conversion of Paul in the second division, and the first Christian Council in the third The introduction of these topics seems, at first sight, to interrupt the flow of the narrative, but they are soon seen to be essential to the completeness of the chronicle, and their place in the story could not be well improved These were great events, but it was especially of vast moment to record not only what was done, but also what was said in connection with each of them

And this is true of the entire history The character and success of the work accomplished by the apostles have always been to Bible students of such absorbing interest as measurably to throw into the background the fact that the history may be also—and perhaps ought chiefly to be—regarded as a record of things said,—of things said with a particular end in view,—and said by certain men trained and qualified for the special purpose of saying them, and of so saying them as to lead men to believe them. And Luke's record is a record of this "Testimony of the Witnesses" To make

this record seems to have been Luke's chief concern. This apparent purpose may perhaps explain the fragmentary character of much of his chronicle, and make clear the fact that his mind, Divinely guided, was not so intent on the continuity of his story, as upon seizing salient points where he might couple Divine teachings with Divinely prepared events and peoples

What the apostles were commissioned to say they were to say as witnesses The resurrection of Christ was the great event they were to attest "Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead" They were not qualified to give testimony to this most stupendous fact in human history, unless they had seen the Lord alive after His death on the Cross and burial in Joseph's tomb This qualification they all possessed, and therefore "with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" But manifestly one needs no special endowment of power simply to bear witness to a fact And the fact of Christ's resurrection came to the multitudes with great power, because the witnesses were able, through their Divine endowment of power, to so connect the fact with the prophecies going before, and the swift following consequences, that none might fail to see that a new era was beginning in God's dealings with His people, and that a brighter day was dawning for Zion

And so in the Acts we have the great fact of the resurrection of Christ solemnly and indubitably attested; and this fact is shown to be so interlaced with the history of the Church, on the one hand, and with the coming triumphs of the Church, on the other, that, as that history plainly evidences the hand of God, so clearly is the future radiant with blessings for the new faith We are interested in the history, and we rejoice in the promises to Zion But we must never forget,—and certainly not in these days of scepticism as to the resurrection,—that the one thing established by apostolic testimony underruns the entire book of the Acts, and binds together into one solid mass the irrefutable witness of the primitive disciples to the truth of this fundamental tenet of our Christian faith The things done have no meaning apart from the great and solemnly certified fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

PREFACE

It is believed that a study of the Acts of the Apostles from this point of view will be found worth while. It will bring into fresh and vivid realization the fact, which many in our day seem willing to surrender, that Christ is indeed "risen from the dead." No less clearly, it is hoped, will this study show that the whole supernatural system of Christianity stands or falls with this fundamental fact so indubitably established by "The Testimony of the Witnesses"

A few words may not be out of place as to the character of this Exposition It is not a critical commentary The author has taken the text of the American Standard Revision as on the whole the best reproduction of the original, and has written with a view to help the plain Bible student in his devotional reading, and the young minister in his pulpit preparation For the former, the analyses of the text, and the division of the comment into corresponding sections will, it is hoped, be found really helpful; and for the latter, these numbered sections may often suggest expository discourses, while the homiletical hints and sermon-outlines, (not intended for servile copying), may sometimes stimulate a tired brain, and provoke many lines of original thought The outlines may, indeed, hurt the lazy minister, but can hardly fail to be helpful to the diligent student, indicating as they do the trend of thought of many master minds who have garnered on these holy fields.

These helps have been gathered in a painstaking examination of more than four thousand volumes of sermons met with in some of the largest libraries of the country, to the shelves of which free access was accorded the author by the efficient curators of these great literary treasures This wide survey of sermonic literature reveals the fact that preachers have not found the Acts of the Apostles a fruitful field for texts and pulpit themes, compared with the Gospels and larger epistles: and the chapters chiefly drawn upon for this purpose are hardly more than a half-dozen, while the favorite text in each of them is not difficult of conjecture It is confidently believed that the study of Luke's record, emphasizing the testimony rather than the history, will bring to light rich stores of homiletical material not commonly subsidized by the ministry of the Word.

The author has now finished the work which has been on his mind for well-nigh thirty years, and to which he has given diligent

study for five years since his enforced retirement through ill-health from the active pastorate The completion of the Exposition so nearly synchronizes with the end of his fifty years in the blessed work of the Gospel Ministry that it seems likely to be the last loving service of a public nature which he can hope to render to the Lord, whose he is and whom he serves. To His gracious care and blessing it is humbly committed, as it now goes forth on its mission of helpfulness to those for whom it has been prepared.

O A. HILLS.

WOOSTER, O,
November 25th, 1912

SYLLABUS.

I THE INTRODUCTION —1 1–11

1 A Summary of Luke's Gospel,—1 1–5
2 The Final Interview,—1 6–8
3 The Ascension,—1 9–11

II THE PREPARATION OF THE WITNESSES;—1·12——2·13.

1 The Return to the Upper Room, and to Prayer,—1·12–14
2 Filling the Vacancy,—1 15–26
3 Endowing the Witnesses with Power,—2 1–13

DIVISION I

WITNESSES "IN JERUSALEM"—II 14——VII 60

1 THE TESTIMONY OF PETER, AIDED BY THE ELEVEN,—2 14–47.
 (1) The Comprehensive and Convincing Character of This Testimony,—2 14–36
 (2) The Effect of Peter's Testimony,—2 37–47.

2. THE TESTIMONY OF PETER AND JOHN,—3 1——4 31.
 (1) The Miracle,—3 1–11
 (2) The Address,—3 12–26
 (3) The Arrest,—4 1–12
 (4) The Release,—4 13–22
 (5) The United Prayer,—4 23–31

3 THE TESTIMONY OF TRUE AND FALSE WITNESSES,—4 32——5 16
 (1) The Self-Sacrificing Believers,—4 32–37
 (2) The Self-Seeking Hypocrites,—5 1–11
 (3) Works of Mercy and Healing,—5 12–16

4. THE TESTIMONY OF THE PRISONERS;—5 17–42

5 THE TESTIMONY OF STEPHEN,—6 1——7 60
 (1) The Rise of the Proto-Martyr,—6 1–8
 (2) His Controversy with the Foreign Jews,—6 9–15
 (3) His Defence before the Sanhedrin,—7 1–60

THE TESTIMONY OF THE WITNESSES

DIVISION II.

WITNESSES "IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA;"—VIII:1—— XII 25.

DIVISION III.

WITNESSES "UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH"—XIII 1——XXVIII 31.

5. BEFORE FELIX,—24:1-27.

6. BEFORE FESTUS,—25:1-12.

7. BEFORE AGRIPPA,—25:13—26:32.

8. WHILE JOURNEYING TO ROME,—27.1——28:16.
   (1) The Voyage,—27:1-13.
   (2) The Tempest,—27·14-38.
   (3) The Wreck,—27:39-44.
   (4) The Stay in Malta,—28.1-10
   (5) The Arrival in Rome,—28.11-16

9. LIFE IN ROME,—28:17-31.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE WITNESSES

I THE INTRODUCTION; I:1-11.

SECTION 1—*A Summary of Luke's Gospel,—1·1–5*

1 The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, 2 until the day in which He was received up, after that He had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom He had chosen 3 to whom He also showed Himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God 4 and, being assembled together with them, He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said He, ye heard from me. 5 for John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence

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1 *The general reference of the writer, vs 1 2 The Lord's parting commands, vs 2 3 The many proofs of the Lord's resurrection, vs 3. 4. The Saviour's final charge, vss 4 and 5*

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1 *The general reference of the writer,—vs. 1.*

The Gospel according to Luke "traces the course of all things from the first" to the day of the Lord's ascension It is a record of what "Jesus began both to do and to teach." The Evangelist does not profess to tell us all that the Lord did and taught He would say with John, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written." He mentions only the beginnings of the Lord's work and words.

It is worthy of note that Luke emphasizes the Lord's doing as well as His teaching. Many love to dwell upon His teaching, who have little to say of His doing,—especially of that culmination

of His doing when for our sins He poured out His soul unto death.

The wonderful brevity of this summary is notable. A single line sums the entire Gospel, up to the forty days of our Lord's post-resurrection life, and especially up to the occurrences of the one crowning day of His earthly sojourn.

*———

Verse 1. Fruitful lessons may be drawn from comparatively unknown characters of the Scriptures Theophilus, otherwise unknown in the primitive Church, is immortalized through his intimacy with Luke A lover of God and Divine things, as his name implies, that name is had in everlasting remembrance in connection with two of the most wonderful books of the Bible—Vs 1 The self-imposed limitations of the Divine Revelation. It might have told us much more It chose to tell us only "the beginnings" of what Jesus did and said This must ever be remembered, if we would rightly interpret what has been revealed—Vs 1 There is an inseparable relation between our Lord's works and His word We cannot hope to understand the one if we ignore the other And the truth is universal; duty and doctrine can never be divorced "If any man is willing to do he shall know," —John 7:17—Vs 1 The really effective teacher must be also a doer In this it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord—Vs. 1. "Truth it is, that the manners of a good and godly teacher ought so to be framed that he speak first with his life, then with his tongue, otherwise he should differ nothing from a stage-player"—*Calvin.*

Vs 1. Doing and Teaching

The preacher must be concerned

I. About his manner of life among his fellow-men

II About the character of his teaching

III. This is the Divine order of his concern,—"Take heed (1) to thyself, and (2) to thy teaching."—I Tim 4:16.

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2. *The Lord's parting commands,—vs. 2.*

These commands came to the disciples "through the Holy Spirit." A special Divine influence attended these post-resurrection revelations of our blessed Lord He breathed on them, and said,

* It will be observed that the Homiletical Hints and Sermon Outlines follow immediately after the sections of the Exposition to which they severally pertain, being separated from the same by a line, as here, and further distinguished also by the smaller type in which the text and various analyses of the same appear. The outlines not otherwise credited are the author's own.

"Receive ye the Holy Spirit." It was the enlightening Spirit who opened their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures.

These final commands to a few chosen men was a marked and distinguishing feature of the new dispensation. This is abundantly evident in the testimony of the witnesses, as Peter asserts in the home of the centurion, "Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead." The nature, necessity, scope and value of this human testimony to the fact of the resurrection of Christ are thus declared in unmistakable terms.

The apostles were themselves convinced of the resurrection, by many proofs; and now they are to go forth to convince their fellow-men of the certainty of this wondrous revelation.

Vs. 2 CHRIST FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

I. At His baptism.
II At His temptation
III. In His preaching.
IV In His miracles
V. In His sacrifice.
VI In His instructions to His disciples—(*Bonar, Rev. Dr. Horace*).

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3. *The many proofs of the Lord's resurrection,—vs. 3.*

These "many proofs" had accumulated upon the minds of these chosen men with overwhelming power. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene,—then to the women returning from the sepulchre,—then to Peter, then to Cleopas and his companion,—then to the ten,—then to the eleven,—then to the seven,—then to the more than five hundred brethren at once,—then to James,—and, last of all, to the apostolic company immediately before His ascension. "It was not one person but many who saw Him;—they saw Him not only separately but together, not only by night, but by day,—not at a distance but near,—not once but many times;—they not only saw Him, but touched Him, conversed with Him, ate with Him, and examined His person to satisfy their doubts."—(Paley).

And this is Luke's summary of it all,—"He showed Himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days"

More conclusive than any and all other evidence that their risen Lord was actually before them must have been what He said to them, for He was frequently "speaking to them the things concerning the kingdom of God." Would we might know more fully what things these were which He had to say concerning the kingdom! Doubtless His heart-stirring expositions of the teachings of Moses and the prophets, which He gave to the wondering Cleopas and his friend, must have been a part of His glorious revelation of the mysteries of His Messianic Kingdom. And, as they went forth to proclaim the truth which they had learned, they could say, "We do not follow cunningly devised fables, when we make known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"

Vs 3 The Evidence of Our Saviour's Resurrection.

I His appearances to His disciples after His death and passion
II The proofs of the reality of His appearances
III The duration and continuance of His appearances to them
IV The subject matter of His discourse with them

Archbishop Tillotson

Vs 3 The Two Stories about the Resurrection

I *The body of Christ had been stolen* This we cannot believe, because
1 The grave was under the guard of soldiers
2 It was the time of the Passover, with its full moon and thronging multitudes
3 There was no evidence of theft in the appearance of the grave
4 The disciples could have had no motive for hiding the body of Jesus.
5 The evidence of the soldiers is absolutely untrustworthy
6 The conduct of the Jewish rulers shows that they did not believe the story themselves

II *The Lord had risen* This story we accept, because
1 A great many witnesses certify to its truth
2 These witnesses met our Lord in a great variety of circumstances
3. These witnesses were strangely incredulous
4 Their testimony was not uniform indeed, but unanimous

5 Their enemies could not answer the question, "What became of the body?"
6 The witnesses staked everything upon the truth of their testimony.
7 The Descent of the Holy Spirit was the crowning evidence of the Resurrection

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4 *The Saviour's final charge,—vss. 4 and 5.*

For this great and solemn mission to a lost world the apostles needed the special help of superhuman powers; and for this help the Lord charges them to wait. They were to wait, not in Galilee, but in Jerusalem,—not in the wilderness, but in the city,—in the city the scene of His sufferings, the scene of the betrayal, of the denial, of the universal forsaking. Here amidst bitter, touching, tender memories they were to wait.

They were to await the promise of the Father. The Lord's reference to this promise must have carried them back to His loving words in the upper room "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive: for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: ye know Him; for He abideth with you and shall be in you" "The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, He shall bear witness of Me." "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go I will send Him unto you."—John 14:16–17 and 26,—15-26 and 16:7.

It was the Father's promise to the Son. It did not therefore depend upon the fulfillment of any condition on the part of fallible man. The glorious promise of the Holy Spirit, in whose blessing they were to share, was a matter between the Father and the Son alone.

The apostles had probably been baptized of John unto repentance and remission of sin; now they are to be baptized with the Holy Spirit unto the high and holy service whereunto they were being called.

Verse 4. "Tarry at a promise till the Lord meets you there."—*Moody.*

Vs 4 WAITING FOR THE PROMISE

I In devout expectancy.
II. In earnest desire
III In united prayer
IV. In seclusion from the world
V. With one accord in one place—(*Cousin, Rev William*).

Vs 5 THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

I. What is it?
II. Is it now attainable?
III What are some of its consequences?
IV What will secure it?
V When may we look for it?—(*Hatfield, Rev. Dr E F*)

SECTION 2—*The Final Interview,—1 6-8*

6 They, therefore, when they were come together, asked Him, saying, Lord, dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority 8 But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you · and ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

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1. *The apostles' thoughts and questions about the kingdom, vs. 6 2 The Lord's thought and words about the power and the witness, vss. 7 and 8.*

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1. *The apostles' thoughts and questions about the kingdom—vs. 6.*

The Lord had spoken to them many "things concerning the kingdom of God." The form of their question leads us to infer that in His horoscope of the future He had intimated the restoration and salvation of the covenant people of Israel.

But the apostles evidently misunderstood their Master. Their idea of the kingdom was one thing, His was another and very different. He therefore represses their unspiritual curiosity, and turns their minds away from useless speculations as to "times or

seasons" to the more important and present concernments of their life and work.

Many in the modern Church may well take this lesson to heart. We are not indeed forbidden to study all that has been revealed of Zion's future; and we have a right to animate our hopes by contemplating and seeking to understand the long line of glorious prophecies concerning the Church's welfare. But we may never rightly so give ourselves to fixing the times or seasons, and vain surmises as to things to come, as to neglect the great and pressing work of winning the world to Christ, and so hastening the Church's final triumph.

Vs. 6. The Longing for the Kingdom.

I. Israel's pathetic cry, as voiced by these disciples
II The Church's perpetual longing
III The earnest prayer of all the saints,—"Lord, tarry not, but come."

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2. *The Lord's thought and words about the power and the witness,—vss. 7 and 8.*

To the work and their part in it the Lord calls their special attention They were to receive power through the coming on them of the Holy Spirit, and were to be the Lord's witnesses.

How shall we interpret this "coming upon them" of the Holy Spirit? The disciples had received the Holy Spirit before. We cannot doubt that (1) they had been the subjects of His saving renewal. The Lord had given them (2) the Spirit of illumination that they might understand the Scriptures. He had (3) breathed on them the Spirit of authority and power to bind the incorrigible and to absolve the penitent. And now (4) in a fuller sense they are to receive the Holy Spirit as a spirit of power and endowment for service in witnessing for their Divine Master.

And this witnessing,—does it differ from the witnessing with which our daily life makes us familiar? Not in any essential particular. Witnesses are not retailers of hearsay evidence. They must be able to say "We speak that we do know, and testify that which we have seen."

To us of to-day, as to the disciples of old, the Lord is saying,

"Ye are my witnesses." They were called upon to attest pre-eminently the resurrection of Christ (2.22b, and 10.41), and all truths growing out of that fact. We are called upon to do the same. Not indeed with bodily eyes have we seen the Lord, yet can we truly swear that He is risen from the dead and reigns on high our sovereign and redeeming Lord

The witnesses of old were to begin at Jerusalem Thence the double story of the resurrection started Here the falsity of the one could be best confuted, here the truth of the other could be made to shine forth And from this beginning they were to go to their neighbors,—first the near, then the far. Like a conquering army they were to sweep the entire land

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Verses 7-8 "Authority" and "Power,"—the latter is might,—the former is might with right—Vss 7-8 Unspiritual curiosity would know the "times or seasons," the prepared and obedient shall "receive power"—Vss 7-8 To "know" is man's way, to "receive" is the Lord's way

Vs 8 The Lord's Last Words

I He was on His way to a throne of power
II The disciples were themselves to receive power
III That power was to come upon them through the Holy Spirit
IV. The abundant adequacy of the promise "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion"

Vs 8 The Promise of Power

I. The Power; what is it?
II The Witnessing, what is it?
III The Coming of the Holy Spirit, what is it?

Vs 8 We Are the Lord's Witnesses

I Our testimony must be truthful
II. It must be direct, or experimental, not hearsay
III It must be consistent; life and speech must be in accord

Vs 7 All Futurities Are Under Fatherly Authority.

I Do not be anxious about coming times
II Do not expect any new conditions of well-being in the future
III Expect the fulfillment of all the Divine Promises
IV Cultivate the strongest love for the father—(*The Homilist.*)

Vs 8 Witnesses for Jesus Christ.

I Our Lord Himself, in His sacred Person, is the solemn truth, the glorious reality, to which His Servants are to bear their witness
II How can we bear witness to a Person?
III In Jesus Christ God made use of this provision of His creative wisdom to enter into communion with His creatures
IV Is there anything in our conduct, or our words, anything that we do, or that we endure, that really bears witness before the eyes of our fellow-men to the life and work of our ascended and invisible Saviour?—(*Canon Liddon*)

Vss 1–8. The Uniqueness of Christ's Earthly Ministry

I It was original and initiatory
II It was resumed in person after his death—(*The Homilist*)

Vss. 6–11 The Parting Promises of the Saviour

I The Promise, "Lo, I am with you always unto the end"
II The Promise of His return to judgment—(*Schleiermacher, F. E*)

Vss 6–8 Christ's Last Words on Earth

I Words of correction
II Words of encouragement
III Words of direction
IV Words of benediction—(*The Homilist*)

Vs 8 Power for Witness

I. Power.
II The Source of Power
III The Use of Power—(*Hastings, Rev Dr James*)

Vs 8 Witnessing for Christ

I The Preparation for it
  1 The Human Element—(1) Receiving Christ's words,—(2) Earnest prayer
  2. The Divine Element—(1) The Ascension,—(2) The Descent of the Holy Spirit
II The Testimony
  1 The Scene of it
  2 The Character of it,—(1) Bold,—(2) Appropriate,—(3) Considerate.
  3. The Effect of it,—(1) Exasperating to enemies,—(2) Edifying to the brotherhood,—(3) Converting to "the called"

SECTION 3.—*The Ascension,—1.9-11.*

9 And when He had said these things, as they were looking, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as He went behold two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven

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1. *The Lord taken up while His disciples looked and wondered, vs 9.*
2. *The message of the men in white, vss 10 and 11*

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1. *The Lord taken up while His disciples looked and wondered, —vs. 9.*

One cannot fail to be impressed by the ineffable serenity of this scene on Olivet. Not until our Lord had finished all He had to say was He parted from them And that parting came, as with uplifted hands He was pronouncing upon them His holy benediction: and then "a cloud received Him out of their sight."

Beyond that cloud who can, yet who would not wish to, trace the ascension glory? Was it not to this glorious exaltation that Paul refers the Psalmist's words,—"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men"? Beyond those clouds and stars may we not hear the antiphonal songs of the welcoming choirs of heaven,—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in! Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory."

Vs. 9 CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

I Christ's life in the world is divided into action and doctrine.
II. The continued acts of Christ are through the Holy Spirit
III While He was speaking the farewell moment arrived.
IV. Even gazing up into heaven must not be too prolonged or fixed.

(*Dr. Hallock.*)

Vs. 9. THE MOUNT OF ASCENSION.

I The ascension of Jesus Christ is intended to determine the way in which we shall now think of Him in His present exalted state
II It signifies to us that He is now clothed with power, and is carrying out the work, which He here began, to perfect accomplishment.
III It is intended to give us a glimpse into the world beyond the grave; and it determines the way in which we shall think of it as well as of him
IV. It certifies to us that Heaven will be a locality.
(*Purves, Rev. Dr. George T.*)

Vss. 1-14. THE ASCENDING LORD.

I. Christ ascended that men might believe in Him
II He ascended that men might know him and commune with Him.
III. He ascended that His people might truly follow Him
IV. He ascended that He might be the Spiritual Redeemer of the whole world—(*DeWitt, Rev. Dr. John*)

Vss 9-11 THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST AN ILLUSTRATION OF HIS FINAL ADVENT.

I. He ascended in His actuality.
II He ascended very unexpectedly.
III. He ascended in a mysterious grandeur.—(*The Homilist.*)

Vs. 9. ASCENSION WITH CHRIST.

I. A Lesson of heavenly-mindedness
II. A Lesson of simple duty.
III A Lesson of holy fear
IV. A Lesson of hope.—(*Dean Farrar, F W.*)

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2. *The message of the men in white,—vss. 10-11.*

This message came to men whose every faculty was absorbed in the contemplation of the wondrous spectacle which they had just witnessed. This surely was not wonderful! As to men in a daze the summons came calling them back to sublunary things.

The reserve of the messengers is notable. They might have told these heaven-gazing Galileans much more than they did. They emphasized alone the certainty of the Lord's return,—"This Jesus,

who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven."

The doctrine of the Lord's return is made much of in the Scriptures. The Church ought to make much more of it than she does. Irrespective of the mooted question whether that return is to be pre-millennial or post-millennial, it is a great and precious promise, to which we look forward every time we gather at the Sacramental Table to "proclaim the Lord's death till He come," and it must never be forgotten by the Church. Jesus is coming back to the world which He has redeemed! "The King shall come to His own."

This second coming of Christ is variously described in Holy Writ,—"The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels,"—"As the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man,"—"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."

Meanwhile the Lord's followers have something else to do than seeking with mortal eyes to penetrate the depths of heaven. The witnesses must prepare to give their testimony.

Vs. 11 "This Jesus."

I. A response to our cry for what is permanent
II A pledge of the identity of the saints in heaven with what they were on earth
III The proclamation of an available Saviour for men
IV The promise of an abiding friend
V. The prophecy of a sure sovereignty.—(*The Homilist*)

Vs. 11. "In Like Manner."

I Personally,—II Visibly,—III In the clouds—(*D. L Moody*)

Vs. 11. Too Much Mere Sentiment in Religion.

I. Too much sentimental interest in the marvelous
II. Too much of this in the objective in religion is not good
III Neither is too much of it in the temporary
IV. It is possible to have too much even of a good thing.

(*The Homilist*)

Vss. 1-14. The Ascending Lord.

I. The Preparation of the witnesses.
II. The Limitation of the witnesses
III The Attitude of the witnesses —(*Boynton, Rev G. M.*)

Vss 1-12. The Ascension of Christ.

I The identification of the Prince Royal
II The reappointment of the staff
III The Coronation of the Prince
IV. The Heralding of the Return of the King
(*Campbell, Rev W. R*)

Vs. 10 The Men in White.

I Whence came they?
II. Why so appareled?
III. Why two? See Matt 28 3
IV. The message they brought.

Section 1—*The Return to the Upper Room and to Prayer,—1 12-14*

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem, a sabbath-day's journey off 13 And when they were come in, they went up into the upper chamber where they were abiding; both Peter and John, and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James 14 These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren

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1 *The return from Olivet,—vs. 12* 2 *The place of assembly,—vs 13.* 3 *The first prayer meeting of the Christian Church,—vs. 14.*

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1. *The return from Olivet,—vs. 12.*

The disciples went out on that memorable 18th of May, why and whither they probably knew not, but with their Divine Leader. "He led them out till they were over against Bethany."

They returned alone. But what high thoughts must they have had of their glorified Master? And what deep questionings must

they have had one with another, as they moved down the slope of Olivet, and filed up into the narrow streets of the Holy City?

After their vision of the ascension glory on that fair sweet morning of the spring time, how strange must have seemed those temple courts and city ways, where so lately they had walked and talked with Him now seated on the Heavenly Throne! Never before, in coming or going, had they taken such a sabbath-day's journey!

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2. *The place of meeting,—vs 13.*

This was the "large upper chamber where they (the apostles) were abiding." There is no reason to doubt that this was the "large upper-room furnished," where the Lord had instituted the Holy Supper, and whence He went forth to Gethsemane. It seems to have become a general rendezvous for the followers of the Lord Christ. And this is not surprising A place so full of fragrant and tender memories of their Lord's last night on earth before He went to Calvary must have possessed for them all an irresistible fascination. Tradition says that a Christian Church was built on the site of this "upper-room" less than a hundred years after the ascension of our Lord. Another report has it that Helena, the mother of Constantine, built a Church on the same site early in the fourth century. Neither of these stories is improbable but not authentic. All that we certainly know is that here was gathered the first assembly of Christian Believers.

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3. *The first prayer meeting,—vs. 14.*

The attendants on that first prayer meeting were a notable company. They were (1) The eleven apostles,—(2) The women, doubtless among them Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Salome,—(3) Mary, the mother of Jesus,—here meeting with her fellow-believers, to pray with them to their Lord and hers, but not to be prayed to by them,—and (4) The brethren of the Lord. These last did not at one time believe in Him (John 7:5), but they had now come to accept Him as their Lord and Saviour. And, as later clearly appears, a goodly number of other people joined the praying circle, so that ultimately a hundred and twenty were numbered in the prayer meeting.

Why did they pray? They had not been directed to pray. The Lord had commanded them to wait. But how natural that they should wish to keep in loving touch with the Lord who had so lately left them, and spend this waiting time in communion with Him!

It seems quite certain also that their steadfastness in prayer had reference to the promised power in the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Lord had said "not many days hence." And as morning after morning dawned each one would doubtless be in his place; and all but unconsciously the query would press for answer, Will this be the morning? Is this the day He will appear?

Verse 14. Waiting times come in every believing life. They are not to be idle times, but times for strengthening our spiritual forces, and preparing to measure up to the oncoming responsibilities

Vs 13 The First Christian Assembly.

I. They were all there
II. Theirs was an attitude of expectancy
III. They clung to their absent Lord in believing and loving fellowship

Vs. 14. Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

I. The simple, natural and sober way in which the Scriptures speak of "Mary, the mother of Jesus."
II. The lowly temporal circumstances of "Mary, the mother of Jesus."
III. The personal character of "Mary, the mother of Jesus"
IV The provision made of the Lord from Calvary for "Mary, the mother of Jesus."
V. The last view of "Mary, the mother of Jesus"

Section 2—*Filling the vacancy,—1:15-26*

15 And in these days Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren, and said (and there was a multitude of persons gathered together, about a hundred and twenty), 16 Brethren, it was needful that the Scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus 17 for he was numbered among us, and received his portion in this ministry. 18 (Now this man obtained a field with the reward of his iniquity; and, falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out 19 And it

became known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch that in their language that field was called Akeldema, that is, the field of blood) 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms,

"Let his habitation be made desolate,
And let no man dwell therein."

and

"His office let another take"

21 Of the men therefore that have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that He was received up from us, of these must one become a witness with us of His resurrection

23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias 24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show of these two the one whom Thou hast chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away that he might go to his own place 26 And they gave lots for them, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles

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1. *The statement of the case,—vss 15-20* 2 *The action proposed,—vss. 21-22* 3 *The plan carried out,—vss 23-26*

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1. *The statement of the case,—vss 15-20*

This statement is made by Peter, who thus early comes to the front as the Leader of the Church, to be succeeded later by Paul, and still later by John His statement is made to a considerable number of his brethren,—"about a hundred and twenty"

The apostle calls attention to two important elements in the case, viz, (1) The terrible end of the traitor. He does not indeed call him the traitor. The "lenity of his expression" is notable. He does not stigmatize him with any opprobrious epithet, or recall the treacherous kiss in the garden. In mildest utterance imaginable he speaks of Judas as the one "who was guide to them that took Jesus." He dwells rather upon the high place to which he had been exalted, "For he was numbered among us, and received his portion in this ministry" From this he turns to the deep degradation of his fall,—"Now this man obtained a field with the reward of his iniquity, and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst,

and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem, in so much that in their language that field was called Akeldama, that is, the field of blood." It is possible that these words, detailing the traitor's end, are Luke's and not Peter's. It is not material to determine the point. There is another account of the end of Judas, given by Matthew (27:3–10), which some have thought is a contradiction of Luke's narrative. It does not seem difficult to reconcile the two stories in all essential particulars. All that is necessary is to suppose that the despairing renegade, bent on suicide, sought out, in some wild and lonely place, some limb of tree or overhanging rock to which he might attach his cord with which to hang himself, while down below were gathered rocks and rubbish and all the foul débris of the city, and above them he would be suspended for weeks a grewsome spectacle, till rotting rope and festering, swollen corpse swaying in the wind brought on the awful catastrophe as the narrative here describes it. And what more natural than that the rulers, having their attention called to it near the close of the fifty days, should buy that horrid place with the traitor's blood-money? It was his money. He had earned it. And therefore the field of blood was his. He "obtained a field with the reward of his iniquity," and there they buried the outcasts and the strangers.

(2) This terrible end of Judas was in accordance with the predictions of Scripture. It was an awful and overwhelming, but not unforeseen, catastrophe. The way the apostle speaks of the Old Testament prediction is noteworthy. David was no doubt the author of the Psalm here quoted But the Psalm had another author. "The Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David." David uttered these words (Psalm 69:20–25) of his enemies: the Holy Spirit, through the Psalmist's tongue, was voicing the sorrows of the Son of God, and the destruction of His implacable foes,—"Let his habitation be made desolate, and let no man dwell therein,"—and from another Psalm (109:8), "His office let another take."

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2. *The action proposed,—vss. 21–22.*

Wherein lay the necessity of filling the apostolate to the exact number it had preceding the defection of the traitor? The full reason we may not know. It is enough perhaps to say that they

were representative of the New Testament Church, as the twelve tribes of Israel stood for the Church of Old Testament times.

There seems to be little foundation for the opinion held by some that this whole procedure was premature and in opposition to the will of God, and that this substitution of Matthias for Judas was a mistake of the early Church under the blundering leadership of the impulsive Peter, because Paul had been appointed to take the place of the traitor as an apostle, although the call was actually given to him only at a later period. Not the least indication is given at any time that God had signified His disapproval of this election. Paul himself never claimed on any occasion that he was one of the Twelve, while, on the contrary, he makes a plain distinction between them and himself in 1 Cor. 15 5. His call constituted him the apostle of the Gentiles, and thus he is contradistinguished from the apostles to the Jews (See Gal. 2 9)

The required qualifications of the substitute apostle are clearly stated by Peter. He must have been a member of the Lord's household from the very beginning of His ministry to the end of it How else could he be a true and faithful witness for his Divine Lord? The fact that there were at least two men who could measure up to this requisition throws an interesting side-light upon the family of Jesus We have known, from a number of sources, that there were several notable women in that household; here alone do we learn that there were other men besides the twelve in constant attendance upon their Lord.

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3 *The plan carried out,—vss. 23–26*

This was accomplished in a way that recognized at once their responsibility, and their dependence upon a wisdom greater than their own Man's part in filling this vacancy embraced these two things,—(1) The choice of those best fitted in their judgment to occupy the vacant place,—and (2) Prayer to their Divine Head for the manifestation of His sovereign will. More than this they were not able to do. That their prayer was addressed to Jesus as sovereign Lord is evident,—(1) He is called the "Lord Jesus" in Verse 21,—(2) As the substitute was to be an apostle of Jesus it was fitting that the choice should be submitted to Him;—(3) As

Jesus chose His apostles on earth, so it was needful that He should choose the substitute by a direct act from His heavenly glory.

So the Lord's part in the great business was an immediate response to their appeal through the lot. The disciples had learned that while "the lot is cast into the lap, the whole disposing thereof is of Jehovah."

Their example confirms our conviction that it is right sometimes, as in great and solemn emergencies, to appeal to the lot. But it is nevertheless a profanation of holy things to make such an appeal lightly, and in the minor affairs of life, where the duty is laid upon us of deciding an issue in the exercise of our own best judgment. The fall of the dice is not a chance, but the ordering of Him who notes the sparrow's fall, and turns the stars in their shining ways. To ask Him to decide whether I shall take my neighbor's money, or he take mine,—whether I shall be adjudged the winning or the booby prize,—is making God a minister of sin; and all such evil ways are an abomination in His sight.

The lot fell upon Matthias; and it is vain to speculate why Joseph Barsabbas, surnamed Justus, was not taken. Matthias was numbered among the twelve; and the number of the witnesses was complete.

These preliminary statements of "the beloved physician" bring to the front the glorious fact of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and that He makes choice of certain men specially qualified to bear witness before their fellow-men to the infallible certainty of this stupendous event. And now, about to trace at length the story of their testimony, with all that hangs upon it and grows out of it, the historian first of all dwells upon the endowment of the witnesses with power for the fitting accomplishment of this marvelous work.

Vs. 16 Sermons on Judas

I. THE SLOW GROWTH OF HIS SIN

I. Probably in the beginning self-deceived.
II. Increasing covetousness, and carping at true piety
III. His resentment of rebuke
IV. The treacherous kiss in Gethsemane

II THE LORD'S FAITHFUL WARNINGS

I Given in Capernaum, as recorded in John 6 70
II Given in Bethany, as written in John 12·4-5
III Given in the Upper Room, as mentioned in John 13 18

III HIS SPURIOUS AND TOO LATE REPENTANCE.

I Its unhealthy and godless origin
II. Manifesting a false progress
III. Coming to a bitter and terrible end

Vss. 15-26 The First Business Meeting of the Christian Church.

I The Nature of the Business
  1. Of very grave importance
  2. In which the Church had a duty to fulfill
  3 Which the Church was competent to discharge
II. The Order of the Business
  1. Peter's address
  2 The nomination
  3 The united prayer
  4 The casting of the lots—(*The Homilist.*)

Vs. 19 The Lessons of Akeldama

I. The wages of sin is death Judas got the silver, but death was on the coin
II The voices of the bloods "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," and the blood of the suicide that could not wash his sins away
III. The lonely graves of the "potter's fields" too often desolate because of sin

Vs 21 The Lord's Busy Ministry

I. He went in and out among His followers
II. Prayer, teaching, living, and working filled up the measure of His days
III Often weary, He found rest on His Father's breast, as when "asleep on the pillow"
IV. He was consumed with zeal for His Father's House

Vss 21-22 The Witnesses of the Resurrection.

I. The Witnesses
II The Sufficiency of the Testimony
III. The Importance of the Fact.

(*Maclaren, Rev. Dr. Alexander.*)

Vs 24. Jesus, the Omniscient Lord

I. It was to Jesus they were now praying
II They recognized His all-searching knowledge of the heart.
III He could not fail to choose the right one to fill the vacancy.

Section 3—*Endowing the witness with power,—2:1–13*

1 And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven 6 And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language 7 And they were all amazed and marveled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? 8 And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, 10 in Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God 12 And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13 But others, mocking, said, They are filled with new wine.

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1. *The Day of Pentecost,—vs. 1* 2 *The Tongues of Fire,—vss. 2–4.* 3 *The astonished multitudes,—vss 5 12.* 4. *The voice of the mockers,—vs. 13*

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1. *The Day of Pentecost,—vs. 1.*

It was the fiftieth day from the Passover and death on the Cross, and was "now being fulfilled." Fifteen of its precious hours were already gone. Jesus had tarried on the earth forty days It was ten days, therefore, since they first went up into that Upper Room It is not said that they prayed every day; but who can doubt it, seeing the record is "They continued in prayer and supplication."

For what did they pray? Evidently for the Holy Spirit. The fact that He had been promised was a reason for their prayer, not against it. "Yet for all this will I be inquired of by the House of Israel to do it for them,"—(Ezekiel 36:37).

And while they prayed, the Holy Spirit came upon them. Had He not come before this tenth and Pentecostal day? We answer the question by asking one,—Is there ever any true praying but through the Holy Spirit? "We know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us."

How does the Holy Spirit teach us to pray? He leads us to earnest heart-searching, deep repentance for sin, sincere faith in Jesus the Christ, and humble submission of all our desires to the wise and gracious will of God. As He does now, did He not so then?

So, on this memorable morning, we may well believe the company of disciples sat chastened, humbled and expectant And then the Holy Spirit fell on them with power

ERRATUM

This title

II. THE PREPARATION OF THE WITNESSES.

I 12—II 13

should have appeared in the middle of page 13 just before

"Section I The Return to the Upper Room, and to Prayer,—1 12-14"

conforming thus to the order of the Syllabus, while the homiletical hints and outlines of pp 23 and 24 should immediately follow the comment on p 22

II. THE PREPARATION OF THE WITNESSES.

I:12—II:13.

Verse 5 "Devout men" They were therefore in the way of receiving further and clearer revelations of the will of God Compare the case of Cornelius, Acts 10 2—Vss 9–11 Mark the providence of God in scattering so many of the Jews throughout the nations, and then bringing representatives of them together at this Pentecost Who can tell how much the success of the Gospel was due to these scattered points of dimly burning and shining light!

Vs 1 What Was This Power?

We infer what "the power" was from what we discover that it actually enabled the disciples to do, viz —

I Rightly to interpret and enforce the teachings of the Old Testament Scriptures

II Rightly to grasp and explain the ever undivorceable connection between the fundamental fact and the fundamental doctrine of the Christian Revelation

III Rightly to interpret and emphasize the coming of the Holy Spirit as the fulfillment of the Father's promise, and the ascension gift of the risen and exalted Christ

IV Rightly to proclaim with convincing and persuasive power a free and gracious salvation through the risen Lord, not only to the men of Israel, but to all the nations of mankind

Vs. 1 Pentecost,—The First Fruits.

I Pentecost was the Feast of First-Fruits,—therefore symbolical of the first-fruits of the Christian Church

II Pentecost was associated with the giving of the law from Sinai, in the Jewish worship

III. The First-Fruits on the day of Pentecost are typical of the gathering of all nations to Christ.

IV. Pentecost teaches the union of vast spiritual forces with feeble human agency —(*The Homilist*)

Vs 1 The Day of Pentecost.

I The evidence of a special Divine influence

II Confirming the Divine mission of Jesus and the truth of Christianity

III Emphasizing the folly of opposition to the kingdom of Christ.

IV. Exhibiting the grand means of advancing the cause of Christ
V. The minister's grand source of encouragement
VI. The reality and importance of revivals of religion
(*Dickinson, Rev Dr. Baxter.*)

Vss. 1–47 PENTECOST.

I A New Manifestation of the Divine Spirit
II A New Style of Religious Ministry
III A New Development of Social Life.—(*The Homilist*)

Vss 1–11 THE FULFILLED PENTECOST

I. The Time
II. The Manner } of the Holy Spirit's coming
III. The Results
(*McArthur, Rev Dr R. S*)

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2. *The Tongues of Fire,—vss 2–4.*

Why came the Holy Spirit in tongues of parting flame? He had come upon their Lord after His baptism as a dove, resting upon Him, and we can see in this a fitting type of His ministry who was "not to strive, nor cry, nor lift up His voice in the street." Here He came as a tongue of fire, in symbol of the gift of tongues, by which His presence was accompanied, and through which, as some say, emphasizing "the tongue," they were to be enabled to speak to the wondering strangers in their own languages, and, as others say, emphasizing "the fire," in sign of the conquering power which their testimony was to possess over all the peoples of the world.

His coming, then, in this way on this day was not so much for the sake of His disciples, as for other people. So, ever is this true of the gift of tongues as the apostle teaches,—"Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving,"—1 Cor. 14:22.

Vss. 1–4. THE GIFT OF TONGUES.

I. The strangeness of this gift.
II. The clear evidence that it was real
III. The wonderful effect of it immediately
IV. The great necessity and usefulness of it.
V. Is there any necessity and consequently probability of the renewing of this miracle?—(*Tillotson*)

VSS. 1-4 PENTECOST.

I. The Season
II The Manner.
III. The Matter
IV. The Results—(*Spurgeon*)

VS 4. WHITSUNDAY.

I The Coming of the Holy Spirit.
II. Filled with the Holy Spirit.
III Transformed by the Holy Spirit.—(*Hastings, Rev Dr. James.*)

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3. *The astonished multitudes,—vss. 5-12.*

Was the sound which first amazed them heard throughout the city? It would seem so, for it is said (2:6) "When this sound was heard, the multitude came together." And any one who has heard the roaring of a cyclone will not find it difficult to believe that a sound, which could be likened to that of the "rushing of a mighty wind," might easily have been heard all over compactly built Jerusalem. But it seems more probable that the multitude came together in answer to the report that must speedily have gone abroad, for Luke says the sound "filled all the house where they were sitting." (2:2.)

Who can tell what it must have been for these devout strangers to hear "the glad tidings" in their own mother tongues in which they were born? The traveler on a foreign shore knows what a thrill of joy passes through him, when in the midst of a jargon of unintelligible voices he catches the familiar accents and idioms of his native language. And if those recognized sounds carry sweet tidings, how like healing balm they fall upon the sore and weary spirit! So these voices of grace must have come to the Jerusalem sojourners.

They heard "the mighty works of God," we are told. These certainly were not the works of creation or providence. They were the wonders of redemption. The ages-old promise was now being fulfilled, and they, first of all the sons of men, were gifted with the wondrous privilege of hearing the marvelous story. Is it strange that they were filled with wonder, amazement, and perplexity? Their astonishment and questioning were removed by

the revelation of the Gospel of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. So is it ever true. The Cross of an uplifted Christ solves the most distressing enigmas of our mortal life.

The transformation of the little group of witnessing disciples is marvelous. These Galileans are nothing in themselves,—nothing but unlearned fisher-folk But these same Galileans filled with the Holy Spirit are clothed with a Divine Power!

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4 *The voice of the mockers,—vs. 13.*

There were some who said, "These men are filled with new wine." It was the voice of ignorance, mingled with malice.

In the assemblies of God's children it sometimes happens that some unbelievers and scoffers are found "When the sons of God came together, Satan came also among them"—(Job 1 6) When the five hundred saw Jesus on the mountain in Galilee they worshipped Him, "but some doubted."—Matt. 28:17.

Verse 13 The loss of power to believe is a terrible visitation The mockers could entertain no explanation of the phenomenon they witnessed in keeping with its high and holy mystery Vs 13—Uncharitable judgments close the door of the heart to precious and helpful truth In their blindness the mockers said, "These men are drunk," and knew not that God was opening to the world the most wonderful revelation of His grace

DIVISION I.

"WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM."

II:14—VII:60.

DIVISION I.

"WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM."

II:14—VII:60.

SECTION I —THE TESTIMONY OF PETER, AIDED BY THE ELEVEN,—2:14-47

SUB-SECTION I.—*The comprehensive and convincing character of this Testimony,—2:14-36.*

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, saying, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is but the third hour of the day, 16 but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel

17 And it shall be in the last days, saith God,
I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh:
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams:
18 Yea, and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days
Will I pour forth of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy
19 And I will show wonders in the heaven above,
And signs on the earth beneath;
Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke·
20 The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the day of the Lord come,
That great and notable day·

21 And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; 23 Him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay· 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death. because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

25 For David saith concerning him,
I beheld the Lord always before my face;
For He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved,
26 Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
Moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope
27 Because Thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades,
Nor wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption.
28 Thou madest known to me the ways of life;
Thou shalt make me full of gladness with Thy countenance

29 Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day.

30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins He would set one upon His throne; 31 he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was He left unto Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption 32 This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses 33 Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear 34 For David ascended not into the heavens but he said himself,

The Lord saith unto my Lord,
Sit Thou on my right hand,
35 Till I make thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet.

36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified

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1 *The charge of the mockers refuted by Peter and the eleven,—vss 14-15*
2. *The true explanation of the wonderful phenomenon given,—vss 16-21.*
3 *The resurrection of Jesus now solemnly attested by Peter and the eleven, —vss. 22-24* 4. *This resurrection shown to have been foretold by the Psalmist,—vss 25-31* 5. *The solemn and jubilant proclamation of Jesus as the risen and exalted Christ,—vss 32-36*

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1. *The charge of the mockers refuted,—vss. 14-15.*

This charge seems to have been made as much in ignorance as in malice. Hence Peter's answer to it, while convincing, was couched in the mildest terms Was there not some likeness to drunken ravings in what the devout strangers heard? Paul's words in Ephesians 5:18 seem to imply that a Spirit-filled man might act sometimes like a drunken man,—at least might appear such to the observer.

Peter is not to be understood as meaning that a man might not get drunk before nine o'clock in the morning. But that at least one hundred and twenty men and women could get into such a maudlin condition by such an early hour was so unlikely that the mere statement of the case carried conviction to all who heard him.

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2. The true explanation of the phenomenon,—vss. 16–21.

This the apostle Peter gives in the words of the prophet Joel; and we cannot but note and admire the wisdom of the speaker in bringing forward the Old Testament Scriptures, which he and his hearers alike accepted as the voice of God

It is especially noteworthy that Peter here quotes from one of the minor prophets. The true value and power of the Old Testament books are not to be estimated by the size of them Joel has left but little on record; but there is abundant reason to believe that he was truly one of the great prophets of Israel's day.

It is further noteworthy that Peter does not quote the prophet accurately. Joel says, "And it shall come to pass afterward" Peter quotes him as saying, "It shall be in the last days, saith God." This is but one illustration of many of the apparent carelessness of New Testament men in using the Old Testament: and much is made of this fact against the doctrine of inspiration. But a careful consideration of the matter may convince us that, on the contrary, it is a proof of the certainty and reality of inspiration. The Spirit inspired Joel; He also inspired Peter. Is it not then the Spirit in Peter quoting Himself in Joel? And could he not then rightly modify His own words, and change the form of the earlier utterance to suit the more definite reference of the later?

This prophecy of Joel is an illustration of the far-reaching, sometimes double, application of Scripture prophecy. The seventeenth and eighteenth verses are clearly pertinent to apostolic times. The remainder of the passage just as clearly stretches onward to the end of the Gospel age. And the closing verse of the citation has a gracious application to all times and peoples. Nor is it to be doubted that the complete fulfillment of this prophecy is yet in the future

The bearing of this passage from Joel on the meaning of Pentecost is worthy of careful consideration. That day is the great model day of the Christian dispensation But just as certainly is it a prophecy and promise of greater things yet to come. The prayers of the saints are not ill-worded when they cry to God for out-pourings of His Holy Spirit. It is a practical paralysis of hope to tell the Church that the Spirit having been given once for all, at Pentecost, He need not be expected to come again and again in showers of blessings.

Verse 14 When Peter voiced his testimony, all the apostles were standing up with him, in solemn witness to the truth of what he said—Vs 18 "When God set forth His fiery law (Deut 33 2) He proclaimed it in one tongue, but the story of grace was told in the language of every nation under heaven"—*Moody*—Vss. 17-18. The participation of both sexes and all ages in the blessings and spread of "the glad tidings" is plainly to be a feature of Gospel times

Verse 21 The world-wide Gospel in the Old Testament It was very different from the exclusiveness of the Jewish people The method of its availability for all men was yet to be revealed to the New Testament Church, even to these apostles of Christ—Vs 22 The traits of a man "approved of God"

Vss 14-36 THE PENTECOSTAL SERMON.

I The Slander refuted
II The Phenomenon explained
III The Resurrection of Jesus attested
IV. The Resurrection foretold
V. The Resurrection proclaimed

Vss. 14-36 THE FIRST CHRISTIAN SERMON ANALYZED.

SUBJECT,—Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of the Hebrew Prophets

I The seers of Israel predict just such scenes as you have witnessed during the last few weeks, and as you are witnessing to-day, as the herald signs of the Messiah's Kingdom
II. The prophetic description of the life of our promised Messiah coincides most remarkably with the facts exhibited in the life of Jesus of Nazareth
III The prophetic marks of the death of the Messiah coincide with those of the death of Jesus.
IV. The prophetic resurrection and ascension of the Messiah correspond with the actual resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth.

(*Smith, Rev Dr. Henry.*)

Vs 15. The Right Treatment of Slander.

A patient and temperate spirit
I In stating the indisputable facts.
II. In showing the improbability of the slanderous story

Vss 16–20. The Gospel Age.

I. An extraordinary effusion of the Divine Spirit.
II Prodigious revolutions.
III An ultimate crisis.
IV A universal salvation —(*The Homilist*)

Vs. 17. A Young Man's Vision.

I. Let us justify our vision
(Of a revived missionary spirit)
II. Let us elaborate the vision
III. Let us promote its realization.—(*Spurgeon.*)

Vs. 21. The Plan of Salvation

I The universal offer of salvation.
II The appointed way of salvation —(*Five Hundred Sketches*)

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3. *The attestation of the resurrection of Christ,—vss. 22–24.*

The unusually formal and solemn manner in which this is done cannot escape attention. The slander refuted, and the true explanation of the phenomenon given, and the apostles all on their feet in solemn asseveration of the truth, and all consenting to the words of the speaker, Peter now briefly rehearses the facts of the life, death and resurrection of the Lord

This rehearsal touches upon these important items, viz.—(1) Jesus of Nazareth had wrought wondrous works among them;—(2) God had set His approval on His ministry;—(3) This was perfectly well known to the people to whom Peter was speaking;—(4) And yet, though they knew these things, they had nevertheless wickedly crucified Him;—(5) And this they had been able to do, only because He had been delivered up to them by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Following this brief and pointed statement of the facts came the great and convincing testimony And as we read the speaker's words we must think of the Twelve standing up before the wondering multitude,—"Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." The notable fact here is that there is not the slightest disposition or effort, on the part of Peter's audience, to impeach or discredit this testimony The pitiful, lying story of the rulers and soldiers is buried under an avalanche of irrefutable testimony given by the Lord's witnesses, who now stand before them.

It was not possible for the Lord of Life to be kept a prisoner behind the bars of death. And with this the Holy Scriptures agree Once again Peter turns to the Old Testament Wonderfully does this wonderful sermon bind together the books of Revelation which many seem inclined to tear asunder It is David now, as the mouth-piece of the Holy Spirit, who is summoned to the front, to confirm the testimony of the witnesses

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Verse 23 The sovereignty of God, and the freedom and responsibility of man, are not contradictory truths They do not need to be reconciled, though we may not be able to see how they agree with one another —Vs 24 The resurrection of Christ is ascribed to the power of God,—this to emphasize our Lord's true humanity

Vs 22 Christianity and Miracles

I Wherein the true force of the argument from miracles consists, and what is it they prove

II What sort of works are to be admitted for miracles in proving the truth of any religion —(*Sherlock, Bishop Thomas*)

Vss 22–23 The Crucifixion of Christ

I Who was delivered?

II To what was He delivered?

III By whom was He delivered?

IV. The design of His being delivered —(*Beaumont, Rev J. E*)

Vs 24 THE INEVITABLENESS OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

I The fact of Christ's resurrection.
II The reasons for it,—
1. Prophecy made it a divine necessity
2 The character of Christ required it
3 He was the Prince of Life —(*Liddon, Canon H P*)

Vs 24. THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

I It was a moral impossibility that Christ should be holden of death
II It was a natural necessity that Jesus should rise from the dead
(*Cannon, Rev Dr. J. F.*)

Vs 24. NOTE.

The earliest preaching of the apostles was mainly apologetic, for it was mainly what St Luke calls it, "a preaching of the resurrection," the fact by which Christ was manifestly declared to be the Son of God, and by which the truth and success of His mission were infallibly sealed
(*Flint, Prof Robert.*)

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4 *The resurrection now shown to have been foretold by the Psalmist,—vss. 25-31.*

It is specially worth while to note the force and bearing of Peter's quotation. These are the words of a prophet,—the royal prophet-psalmist of God's covenant people. They are words which evidently possess a surface and at the same time an occult meaning,—the surface meaning expressing the prophet's own hope of a future and blessed life,—the occult signification setting forth the resurrection (of course, by necessity preceded by the death and burial) of the Messiah. This hidden meaning evidently could not have been injected into, or interpreted out of, the Psalmist's words but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Only through some such meaning could there be any, even the faintest, expression of that promise, oath-sworn of Jehovah, that of David's loins He would set a son upon his throne, to reign forever and forever.

Did the royal prophet have any idea of the Messianic reference

of his own words? No one can read the words of Nathan and David in 2 Samuel 7:16, and 18–29, and David's words in 2 Samuel 23:5, without coming to the conclusion that he certainly understood some things about the matter; and that this knowledge gave him great hope and joy. It is probable indeed that he did not see all things clearly; and his is perhaps an instance of that "searching what time, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them," of which this same Peter speaks in his first epistle (1:11).

The important and notable thing for us to remember here is this,—Here in the heart of the Hebrew literature, and in the purest and palmiest day of the Hebrew people, we have a comforting revelation of the future life and its eternal joys,—set forth as the portion of all believers, and now and here specifically interpreted by the Holy Spirit as teaching also the death, burial and resurrection of the Christ! This is the point of Peter's citation. There is no possible evasion of this conclusion to those who, like Peter's audience, accepted the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God. The apostle's use of the Psalmist's words shows that, to him and them alike, those words were an end of all controversy. So, again the solemn testimony is delivered,—"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." And the conclusion of Peter's great sermon, with its two mighty "therefores," is an overwhelming demonstration of the joint power of Divine Prophecy and Human Testimony in establishing the fact and doctrine of the resurrection of the Christ.

Verse 25. This blessed assurance is enough for even a New Testament saint, what exalted faith does it disclose in the "sweet singer of ancient Israel"?

Vs. 27 Hades, or Sheol

I. The ancient Hebrew view of "the under world"
II. The doctrine of the so-called "intermediate state"
III. The Papal doctrine of Purgatory
IV. The New Testament teaching as to the state of the dead.

5. *The solemn and jubilant proclamation of Jesus as the risen and exalted Christ,—vss. 32–36.*

Peter's first "therefore" sounds a note of confidence and triumph,—"Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear." The successive stages in our Lord's exaltation are thus sketched by the witness,—His resurrection from the dead, His ascension to glory, and His enthronement at the right hand of the Father.

No such exaltation can be predicated of David; and the words of the prophet-psalmist already cited were not fulfilled in him. This is confirmed by David's words cited from another Psalm, viz.—

> "The Lord said unto my Lord,
> Sit Thou on my right hand,
> Till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet"

Peter's words do not mean that David did not go to heaven at death, but only that no such exaltation attended his entrance into the spirit-world as his inspired words here ascribe to Jesus the Christ.

The apostle's second "therefore" is a solemn assurance and admonition in view of the fact and results of the resurrection. Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, was indeed their Messiah and Lord. "Let all the house of Israel, therefore, know assuredly that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." And this word of the triumphing witness-preacher goes far beyond the audience gathered in Jerusalem and comes to all Israel in all the world; and as well to all the nations of mankind.

Verse 36 If we receive Him in sincerity as the Christ, we shall also acknowledge Him as Lord—Vs 36. The promise of the Second Psalm is now fulfilled,—

> "Yet have I set my King
> Upon my holy hill of Zion"

—Vss. 33–36. The significant "therefores" of Peter's sermon.

Vs. 36 JESUS IS THE CHRIST.

I. The force of Peter's reasoning
II The importance of his conclusion.

Simeon (*Horæ Homileticæ*).

Vs 36 THE GREAT FACT.

I The wonderful event itself
II Our knowledge of the fact.
III The indubitable certainty of our knowledge

SUB-SECTION 2—*The Effect of Peter's Testimony,—2 37–47*

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? 38 And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit 39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him 40 And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation 41 They then that received his word were baptized and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common, 45 and they sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all, according as any man had need 46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 praising God, and having favor with all the people And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved

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1 *The immediate effect,—2 37–42*
2 *The more remote effect,—2 43–47*

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1. *The immediate effect,—2 37–42.*

This was wonderful, and appears in the instant and overwhelming conviction of sin of the multitude We must think of the constantly enlarging company, assembled perhaps in a more capacious room, possibly in the temple, or one of its spacious areas. There were first the company of the apostles,—then the one hundred

and twenty,—then the devout strangers from many nations,—and then "the Jerusalem sinners." Some were probably there who, in the frenzied mob before Pilate, had cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children" But whether they had been participants in the crucifixion of Jesus or not, all now, with opened eyes, could not but see that, if the Messiah rose from the dead, He must have been buried in the grave; and that if He had been put in the sepulchre, He must have died on Calvary; and that if He died on the cross, it must have been to make atonement for sin. The Cross then immediately brought before them their sin. And at once their great and bitter cry burst forth,—"Brethren, what shall we do?"

Peter immediately proclaims the glad tidings of repentance and faith in the crucified Christ. When once men are truly convicted of sin it is the appointed time to preach to them the Gospel.

The proof of their genuine faith and repentance is two-fold, viz —They receive baptism, according to the apostle's word;—and then they receive the Holy Spirit, as promised by the preacher. He fell on them, possibly in tongues of parting flame, as on the earlier disciples, but certainly to take entire possession of their spiritual natures, so that they were "filled with the Holy Spirit"

The wide reach of the Gospel promise is made plain by Peter. That promise was to them and to their children. Those children had been sharers with them of the blessings of the Old Covenant, and certainly they shall not be cut off from the richer benedictions of the New Covenant. And they were for all in every place and age, who should be called of their Divine Lord

Peter follows up his great sermon with an after-meeting, in which he continues both his testimony and his exhortation. And under the mighty influences of this wonderful day we see the multitudes (1) submitting to baptism, the forerunners of a long line of confessors of the faith,—(2) uniting with the Church, and becoming known as followers of the Nazarene,—and (3) daily living a godly and believing life.

Verse 37. This cry of the convicted is here a most proper question; but it may be asked with a wholly improper motive —Vs 38. This receiving the Holy Spirit is for salvation, that mentioned in John 20 22 is receiving Him

for service—Vs. 39 God is still the God of the Covenant. The Old Testament and the New Testament Churches are one and the same. The children still have a part in the promise, as of old—Vs 39 There is a valid distinction between the general and effectual in the calls of the Gospel—Vs. 40. A "crooked generation" is not willing in a straightforward way to accept the truth on overwhelming testimony; and the only salvation from a "crooked generation" is by faith in Christ—Vs 41 "The first time the law was preached three thousand were killed (Ex 32 28), the first time grace was preached three thousand were saved."—(*Moody*)—Vs 42. Compare the threefold use of "steadfastly" by Luke in 1 14, 2 42, and 2 46—Vs. 42 "Teaching" and "Fellowship" must always go together Doctrinal agreement on fundamentals is the only real foundation of true communion—Vs 42 "The breaking of bread," as used here, seems to differ from the same phrase as used in 2 46 Here it apparently refers to the Lord's Supper, there the reference is to a common meal at home.

Vs 37 The Effusion of the Holy Spirit

I Marked by a noble freedom of speech
II Shown in a miracle of dignity and weight
III A sermon showing an invincible power of reasoning
IV Containing some stinging reproofs
V Revealing threatenings of approaching judgments

(*Saurin, Rev. Jacques.*)

Vs 38. The Immediate Duty of a Convicted Sinner.

I Repentance of all sin, and baptism
II. Both the internal experience and the external rite are necessary, but for different reasons
III. One must be right with God, as shown in the first, and known to be right to one's fellow-men, as shown in the second
IV. The order here stated is all-important,—first repentance, and, second, baptism
V The external rite involves the right attitude of the soul to Jesus, and all-saving truth

Vs 41 "In That Day"

I. Day of mourning
II. Day of decision.
III Day of rejoicing.
IV. Day of triumph

Vs 41. Reasons for Church Membership

I The performance of a necessary duty
II The preservation of the spiritual nature.
III. The benefits of mutual association
IV. The need of training and instruction—(*Smith, Rev W. D*)

Vss. 38–39 The Subjects of Baptism.

I. The Abrahamic covenant, in its principles and design, embraced the Christian dispensation.
II Infants were included in that covenant as parties to its conditions and promises.
III. Baptism has taken the place of circumcision as the seal of the covenant
IV The right of infants to this ordinance has been recognized by Christ and the apostles, and their successors —(*Baird, Rev Thos Dickson*)

Vss. 37–47 The Effect and Evidence of True Religion.

I Brotherly love among all believers
II Mutual helpfulness among Christians
III Great joy in the service of the Lord

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2 *The more remote effect,—2·43–47.*

This was far-reaching, and issued in a series of great things;—

Great fear came upon all, and especially upon unbelievers. The forces of opposition were dumbfounded, and were not yet organized to resist the progress of the rising religion.

Great miracles were wrought through the apostles. They had once been unbelieving themselves, and therefore weak. Now they are strong. And the promise of their Divine Master is fulfilled,—"He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father."

A great spirit of unity and fellowship prevailed. This first exhibition of the spirit of so-called communism will be considered more fully in the exposition of the closing verses of the fourth chapter. But just now it is well to note its real character and limitations. It was (1) the voluntary surrender of personal property in the spirit of self-sacrificing love to those who shared the common hope of the glorious Gospel. It was (2) to supply the present needs of those whom the providence of God had brought together in unusual and unexpected circumstances.

Great joy among believers (1) in worship;—(2) in daily living; (3) in the favor of their acquaintances and neighbors.

Great increase in the number of believers,—of whom it is said they were "added to them of the Lord."

Verse 43 There is a proper "fear of God," and there is "a fear that hath torment"—Vs 43 The "wonders and signs" were done not by, but "through," the apostles—Vs. 46 The connection between, and inter-action of, the home life and public worship are worthy the profoundest consideration—Vs 46 The joyfulness of Christian service is worth more attention from both saint and sinner than it commonly receives—Vs 46 "Day by Day" is the secret at once of the life of trust, and the life of obedience—Vs 46 The suggestiveness of the relations of "gladness" and "singleness of heart."—Vss 46 and 47 The two expressions, "Day by Day," and the suggestive relations of the second to the first—Vs 47 Additions to the Church are of little value, if they be not "added of the Lord"—Vs 47 Happy the Church that is made up of "saved" people The root idea of the original word "to save" is "to sift" "Saved ones" are "sifted ones"—Vs 47 The human side of the Church's growth, men are drawn to a loving and happy fellowship

Vs 42 Apostolic Christianity

They continued steadfastly

I In the apostles' teaching
II In the fellowship
III In the breaking of bread
IV In the prayers
V In these they continued steadfastly—(*Hastings, Rev Dr. James*)

Vss 44-47 The State of the Primitive Church

I Their Charity II Their Piety III Their Increase

Simeon (*Horæ Homileticæ*)

Vss 44-45 The Conversion of the Purse

I It follows and evidences the conversion of the soul
II That purse henceforth belongs not to one's self, but to the Lord
III Its contents are henceforth administered with reference to the needs of the Lord's people

Vss 37-47 The Guidance of Inquirers

I Directions to the Inquiring
  1 Personal,—Repentance,—Faith,—Confession
  2 Family 3 Community
II. Directions followed by the Inquiring
  1 Confession of personal faith
  2 Reverent use of means,—Doctrine,—Fellowship—Communism,—Prayers
  3 Self-sacrificing Christian fellowship
  4 Harmony 5 Joyfulness 6 Prosperity

VSS 1-47. GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON PENTECOST.

I. We must note the slow merging of the personal into the spiritual in the relations of the apostles to their Lord.
II Their profound and joyful consciousness of the fact that an Almighty and Gracious Power was behind them in their work
III Their assured and unwavering offer of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ to all penitent and believing souls.
IV Their clear conviction and presentation of the duty of immediate submission by all men to Jesus Christ as the Sovereign Lord and King.

SECTION 2 —THE TESTIMONY OF PETER AND JOHN,—3·1——4 31

Sub-section 1 —*The Miracle,—3·1–11*

1 Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour 2 And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple, 3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms 4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us 5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them 6 But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, that I give thee In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength 8 And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God 10 and they took knowledge of him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him 11 And as he held Peter and John all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering

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1. *The Hour of Prayer;—vss 1–3* 2 *The Power of the Name,—vss. 4–8*
3 *The Wondering Multitude,—vss. 9–11*

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1. *The Hour of Prayer,—vss. 1–3.*

The daily worship was at nine and three o'clock. The best times of the day were given to God. Daily toilers could not, and would not be expected to, join in this daily service; and other

arrangements seem to have been made for them, as appears from 5:20–21. These arrangements emphasize the value of regular and stated times for the public worship of Almighty God.

The daily bringing of the cripple to the Gate beautifully illustrates the connection between worship and charity. His friends doubtless helped him in the measure of their ability. Then they laid him at the gate of the temple, rightly judging that among worshipers of God would most certainly be found truest compassion for needy men.

But the long daily waiting, the constant asking, and frequent rebuffs, and, worse than all else probably, the suspicions of the genuineness of his needs on the part of hasty observers, must have made his lot a very sad and lonely one This morning, however, dawns a memorable day in his career.

Verse 1. Duty never conflicts with true worship The day's work often seems done, when the most important part remains to be accomplished

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2. *The Power of the Name,—vss. 4–8.*

The apparent source of blessing was a most unlikely one. But the cripple will venture the appeal for help once more: and he finds behind the apparent fountain of aid a spring of healing in the omnipotent resources of the Wonderful Name

The cripple's case appealed to Peter and John because, through no fault of his, he had suffered a lifetime of helplessness and poverty. But they were themselves poor and could help him only by invoking the power of the "Name above every name." Paul describes himself and his companions as "poor, yet making many rich." This was equally true of Peter and John

To do the cripple of the gate any good it was necessary that he, as well as they, should have faith in the power of the Name. Therefore Peter says to him, first of all, "Look on us." Had he not supposed that they were but common worshipers? And did not that intent look on the part of the apostles, begetting intensity of attention on the beggar's part, reveal them to him as the widely known followers of the Nazarene?

God's "over-answers to prayer" find suggestive illustration in the cripple's case. He asked for alms, but received vastly more than earthly gifts. God deals with us oftentimes after the same manner. The woman of Samaria asked for water; the Lord Jesus gave her the water of life.

There was a suggestive though rapid process in the recovery of the cripple of the gate;—(1) he "stood,"—(2) he "began to walk," —(3) he went forward "walking and leaping,"—(4) His jubilant entrance into the temple was accompanied by his "praising God." This last shows that he looked beyond the noted instruments of blessing to the Divine Source in the Almighty Name, and that it was really his faith in that Name which had given him perfect soundness in the presence of all the people.

Verse 4. The awakening of faith Our low expectations in asking "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"—Vs 6 The instrument of blessing may be weak and poor, yet used of God to do a mighty work, and confer on the needy inestimable blessings. —Vs 7. Instrumentality is often used to encourage faith, e. g The clay and the spittle,—The washing in Siloam —Vs. 8. How sweet the action of gratitude!

Vss 1-16 THE POWER OF THE NAME.

I All that Jesus says will be done
II All that Jesus asks will be granted
III All that Jesus judges will stand forever

Vss. 1-11. THE LAME MAN HEALED.

I Picture of the Place of Prayer.
II. Picture of the beginning of a life of strength, real liberty, and real power.
(*Erdman, Rev. Dr Charles R.*)

3. *The Wondering Multitude,—vss. 9-11.*

The amazement of the people was natural:—(1) The man had been a notable beggar and cripple in Jerusalem for over forty years;—(2) The miracle had been wrought by the fisher-folk of Galilee;—(3) It was the first miracle which they had performed;—

(4) They had healed the man openly and avowedly in the Name of Jesus the Nazarene.

Yet it would seem as if that fickle multitude were inclined to ascribe the efficacious result to the mere human instrumentality. And hence the peculiar earnestness of the apostle's words.

Verse 9. True thankfulness is not ashamed of an open manifestation.—Vs 10 The man in the fullness of his strength was glad to be remembered as the cripple of the gate Many are ashamed of the "hole of the pit, whence they were digged"—Vs 12 The lesson of the miracle is the exaltation of Jesus in the sermon of the apostle Peter—Vs 12 Seizing the fitting moment for the message, and utilizing an unspiritual curiosity

Vs 12 TIMELY PREACHING

I The Preacher
II The Message
III The Occasion
IV The People

Vss 12–21 THE SERMON IN THE PORCH

I The Law;—Their rejection of the Christ
II The Gospel,—
 1 Despair not the end of conviction
 2 Sins of ignorance
 3 The execution of God's purpose
 4 Their Messiah was not lost
III The Exhortation
 1 Their duty.
 2 The motive

Vss 1–11 THE MIRACLE AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE

I A Fact
 1 The authors—2 The season—3 The subject
 4 The scene—5 The method—6 The indubitableness.
II. A Text
 1 Traces the miracle to its true author
 2 Connects it with the name of Christ
 3 Develops the Christian Plan of Restitution
III. An Epoch
 1 A new impulse in the world's antagonism to Christianity
 2 A new demonstration of God's power in Christianity

(*The Homilist.*)

SUB-SECTION 2—*The Address,—3:12–26*

12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this man? or why fasten ye your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk? 13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His servant Jesus, whom ye delivered up and denied before the face of Pilate when he had determined to release Him. 14 But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, 15 and killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses 16 And by faith in His name hath His name made this man strong, whom ye behold and know, yea, the faith that is through Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all

17 And now, brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers 18 But the things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He thus fulfilled. 19 Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus, 21 whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets that have been from of old 22 Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me, to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you 23 And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people 24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days 25 Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed 26 Unto you first God, having raised up His Servant, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities

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1 *The Personal Disclaimer, Vs 12* 2 *The Power was that of the Risen Christ, Vss 13–16.* 3 *Repentance urged in view of the Suffering, Risen, and Returning Christ, Vss 17–21* 4 *The Accordant Testimony of the Prophets from Moses onward, Vss 22–24* 5 *Peter's final and loving appeal, Vss 25–26*

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1. *The Personal Disclaimer,—vs. 12.*

Here was a great opportunity for self-glorification; but this was not in the thought of the faithful witnesses On the contrary they furnish a conspicuous illustration of that hiding behind the

Cross which is the glory of the Christian ministry. "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this man? or why fasten ye your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk?" Peter would have the glory all given to his Divine Master. He and John had only been humble instruments in the Almighty Hand of the exalted Nazarene.

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2. *The Power was that of the risen Christ,—vss. 15–16.*

Peter, immediately disavowing all personal merit in the miracle, connects the healing of the cripple with Jesus of Nazareth, and presents the case in a chain of testimony that is irrefutable. It was Jesus of Nazareth whom they had crucified. The aggravation of their sin was four-fold;—(1) They had delivered Him up and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he had been minded to let Him go;—(2) They had preferred a murderer to the prophet of Galilee;—(3) It was the "Holy and Righteous One" whom they had denied;—(4) It was the "Prince of Life" whom they had killed.

But God had raised Him from the dead It was the God of their fathers, of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob,—the God of glorified saints, for "He is not the God of the dead but of the living," who had thus glorified His Servant. Of this mighty and pregnant fact Peter and his fellow-disciples were witnesses. Once again, therefore, he sets before the people their solemn testimony to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And it was this risen and glorified Son of God who had healed the man whom they had known for many years as the cripple and beggar at the Beautiful Gate The faith which was "through Him," and "in His Name," had given the man both health and strength.

Verse 13 God has just claims upon us because of His relations to our fathers The Father is here glorifying His Son.—Vs 14. The solemn charge of a faithful witness The law must go before the Gospel Glad tidings can be such only to those convicted of sin—Vs. 15 The resurrection is a terrible fact to some, a doctrine of hope to others The Prince of Life is the author of life His dying hand opened the gates of life to the dying robber—Vs 16 Faith in the name of Jesus can remove mountains The healing of faith is not impossible in our day. Faith is omnipotent when it takes hold of the Divine strength

Vss. 12–21. The Prince of Life.

I. Jesus Presented.
II Sinners Condemned
III Pardon Proclaimed—(*McCrory, Rev. J. T.*)

Vs 16 The Lame Man Healed.

I. His Helplessness.
 1 From his birth.
 2. Coloring his entire life.
II. His Healing.
 1. He recognized himself as an object of charity.
 2 He submitted to be helped to the place where compassion could reach him and do its work.
III. His use of soundness and strength
 1 He stood
 2 He began to walk
 3 His walking brought him into the temple of God—(*Drew Sermons of 1909, on Golden Texts, S. S. Lessons.*)

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3. *Repentance is now urged by the apostle in view of the Suffering, Risen, and Returning Christ,—vss. 17–21.*

Peter would have the people and their rulers understand that they had committed a great sin in crucifying their Messiah, even though they had done it in ignorance,—for ignorance may explain but does not excuse wrongdoing,—and even though in doing it they had fulfilled the prophetic word. He calls upon them, therefore, to repent. Their sin, great and grievous as it was, was not a "sin unto death," and forgiveness and "the blotting out" of their transgressions awaited their return to God in sincere penitence. "Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" also, and the return of their preappointed Messiah, even Jesus, were conditioned upon the confession and forsaking of their evil ways.

This Jesus had been received up into heaven, not to abide there forever, but to await "the restoration of all things." The return of our Lord to the world He has redeemed is here first mentioned in apostolic teaching.

Some significant phrases of Peter's address deserve special notice:—(1) "Times of refreshing" is one. Literally it is "Times

of soul-uplifting" They come from the "presence of the Lord." Times of refreshing are to mark the history of the Church till the Christ returns; and they are distinguished as times of repentance, and the putting away of sin. (2) "The restoration of all things" is another obscure phrase What does it mean? Our Lord uses the same expression of John the Baptist (Matt. 17.10). In answer to His disciples' question, "Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come?" He answered and said, "Elijah indeed cometh, and shall restore all things, but I say unto you that Elijah is come already" John's "restoring all things" was evidently his preparing the way of the Lord. In like manner the Lord will return when His way is prepared And that time will surely come The Golden Age is in the future The prophets all foretell the coming of that day.

The notable thing in this address of Peter is his testimony to the teaching of the prophets concerning the death, resurrection, and return of the Christ. The remainder of his discourse continues this thought.

Verse 17 The most charitable construction is always the best Some of the rules undoubtedly sinned against light—Vs 18 God carries out His plans even through the sins and mistakes of His people—Vs 19 Forgiveness is conditioned on repentance To the penitent soul God loves to come with refreshing The downcast He will lift up—Vs 20 Jesus is for us the appointed Christ—Vs 21 God's wonderful way of keeping alive the hopes of His children His prophets in all the ages have been the ministers of hope—Vs 22 The Mosaic revelation of the coming Messiah was in many respects wonderfully clear—Vs 23 The obligation of obedience is not less explicit than the Divine Promise—Vs 24 Their days were days of light, toward which all the ages had been looking

Vs 19 The Apostolical Exhortation

I The apostle bade men to repent and be converted
II There was good reason for this command
III Without repentance and conversion sin cannot be pardoned

(*Spurgeon*)

Vs 14. Men Denying the Just One

I. The Person against whom this outrage was perpetrated
II. The nature of the outrage that was enacted
III. The outcome of it all—(*The Homilist*)

Vs. 19. TIMES OF REFRESHING.

I. Illustrations of them
II The Source whence they come.
III The blessed results they produce —(*The Homilist.*)

Vs 19. REPENTANCE, CONVERSION, AND PARDON.

I What is it to repent?
II What is it to be converted?
III How the sins of men may and will be blotted out in consequence of their repenting and being converted
IV What is the duty of sinners respecting their repentance and conversion? (*Smalley, Rev Dr John*)

Vss 19–21 THE CHRISTIAN PLAN OF EFFECTING THE MORAL RESTITUTION OF THE WORLD

I. It aims at a thorough spiritual reformation as the necessary condition.
 1 Repentance,—2 Absolution,—3 Invigoration
II It is ever under the direction of the great God
 1 The invigorating influence is from Him
 2 The chief agent is from God
 3 The revelation of the scheme is from God
III It will completely realize its glorious end before the final advent of Christ
 1 Christ is in heaven
 2 His restoring work is proceeding on earth
 3 When His great plan has fully realized its results, He will come, and not before —(*The Homilist.*)

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4. *The accordant testimony of the Prophets from Moses onward,— vss. 22–24*

The passage, which Peter cites from Deuteronomy, is used also by Stephen (7.37). It is worth our while to tarry here a little for its attentive study.

The words are ascribed to Moses by the inspired apostle. It is no adequate explanation of their origin to say they are found in a book commonly attributed to Moses. We have here clearly set forth a certain specified person speaking of a certain specified and clearly understood person.

The likeness of the Nazarene to Moses is declared but not dwelt upon by Peter, because it was obvious. In several particulars the resemblance is striking:—(1) Both belonged to our common humanity. Jesus was "made like unto His brethren," even as was Moses. (2) Both were mediators between God and His people. (3) Both magnified the Divine Law, and made it honorable. (4) Both received manifold and unequivocal tokens of the Divine approval. Obedience to the coming prophet was solemnly enjoined; and the dire consequences of disobedience were plainly set forth.

With this testimony of Moses to the character and claims of the Messiah accords the teaching of the whole line of prophets from the first institution of the prophetical order in Samuel, onward through the long centuries

The Holy Spirit, speaking thus through the apostle, certifies to us that the prophetic Scriptures are everywhere alive to the character and mission of the Messiah. And the solemn testimony of the Lord's witnesses assures us of the certainty that this character and mission are met in Jesus of Nazareth. Thus, once again the voice of prophecy and the testimony of the chosen witnesses combine to establish upon impregnable foundations the claims of the risen Nazarene to be the very Christ of God.

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5. *Peter's final and loving appeal,—vss. 25-26.*

The considerate and even tender and pleading tone of the apostle's words in this address in Solomon's Porch is in marked contrast with the cogent reasoning and triumphant conclusion of his Pentecostal sermon.

That spirit of compassionate yearning reaches its culmination in these closing sentences. It grows in pathos, and gathers, one would think, well-nigh compelling power from three considerations; viz.—(1) They were the children of the prophets. That long line of faithful men, gifted with the vision of a brighter day, was their line. They had a godly and royal lineage; and, of all men, it behooved them especially to be "not faithless but believing." (2) They were the children of the covenant, which God had made with their fathers, and which expressly included their children in successive generations. That covenant was made with Abraham, the father of all believers. The promises of that covenant were

of a two-fold character;—"I will bless thee; and thou shalt be a blessing." It is quite remarkable that the apostle should here mention first of all only the second of these two,—not the application of the covenant to the individual and the family, but the world-wide scope of it,—"In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (3) The mission of the risen Son of God was, first of all, to them. Here Peter emphasizes the first part of the covenant promise. This mission of the Messiah was one of blessing. He came, "not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." That blessing was in turning them away every one of them from their iniquities

The apostle's address closes, as it began, with his clear and undoubting, though incidental, testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,—"Unto you first God, having raised up His Servant, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities"

Verse 25 The unspeakable privileges of the covenant children—Vs. 26 The blessedness of being turned away from all our iniquities

Vs. 26. MARVELOUS MERCY

I. He was sent to bless
II With the greatest blessing
III The most wicked first—(*The Homilist*)

Vss 12-13 THE MORAL ASPECT OF PHYSICAL BLESSING.

The speech of Peter may be regarded as
I Showing the false method of looking at human affairs
II Showing the true method of regarding the most extraordinary events.
III Showing the only method of setting man right with God.
IV. *Showing the sublime object of Jesus Christ's incarnation*
(*Parker, Rev. Dr Joseph.*)

Vs 26 PERSONAL HOLINESS THE GREAT BLESSING.

I The message of the Gospel is a message of blessing
II. The great blessing the Gospel imparts is perfect holiness
III. The only way and means of procuring and imparting this great blessing is the incarnation and death of Christ.
IV. The necessity of making this great object of Christ's mission a personal matter—(*Spring, Rev. Dr. Gardiner.*)

This notable assembly began at the Hour of Prayer, and was broken up with the closing in of evening. There must have been "great searchings of hearts," as they left the Temple Courts that summer evening, and in the gloaming sought their homes, still wondering at the miracle they had witnessed, and pondering the pregnant truths which they had heard that afternoon.

But for the faithful witnesses there was no home-going in the quiet shadows They must spend the night in the prison-house.

SUB-SECTION 3—*The Arrest,—4 1–12*

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 being sore troubled because they taught the people and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in ward unto the morrow, for it was now eventide 4 But many of them that heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to be about five thousand

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem, 6 and Annas the high-priest was there, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high-priest 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this? 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders, 9 if we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole, 10 be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in Him doth this man stand here before you whole 11 He is the stone which was set at nought of you, the builders, which was made the head of the corner 12 And in none other is there salvation for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved

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1 *In Prison,—Vss 1–4* 2 *Before the Council,—Vss 5–12,*—(a) *The Inquisition,—Vss. 5–7,*—(b) *The Answering Testimony,—Vss 8–12*

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1. *In Prison,—vss. 1–4*

The ruling powers in Jerusalem at this time were Sadducees. They did not believe in the resurrection, nor in angels or spirits,—

and of course not in any future life at all. They were sore troubled by two things: (1) Their authority was being contravened by these "unlearned and ignorant" Galileans,—and (2) the burden of the preaching of these unauthorized teachers was "the resurrection of the dead."

The scope of apostolic teaching was either widening, or the rulers were wise enough to see the logical trend of the apostles' testimony. From their proclamation "in Jesus of the resurrection of the dead," either the apostles or their enemies drew the inevitable inference of a general resurrection, and consequently of a life beyond the grave This the rulers were not willing to believe; and, unable to answer the irrefutable testimony of the disciples, they determined to silence them by putting them into prison

But "the Word of God was not bound." The effects of that sermon in Solomon's Porch, and the general testimony of the faithful witnesses, were mighty; and a great company came to be believers, the number being about five thousand. Whether or not this means so many in addition to the Pentecostal harvest of three thousand is not clear. It is probable, however, that the whole number up to this date had come to be about five thousand.

Verse 2 The rulers were troubled by the fact that the disciples presumed to teach but the people must be taught, if they had become incompetent, they must be set aside When the Church ceases to teach, other teachers will be raised up The real trouble of the rulers was not the fact of the disciples teaching, but with the subject-matter of that teaching, i e the resurrection —Vs 4 "That heard the word,"—Compare 2 41 These are the first uses of an expression quite common in this book of the Acts Its suggestive meaning, lost to us in large measure, needs to be recovered So true to the one great thought was the preaching of the witnesses, that their preaching came to be characterized as the "word,"—one word, not many. Peter's first sermon resulted in the conversion of three thousand souls, his second in that of two thousand more.

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2. *Before the Council,—vss. 5-12,—(a) The Inquisition,—vss. 5-7.*

The names and characters of the inquisitors are set forth in Luke's narrative. They were largely of one family. They were all unbelievers,—atheists probably, or at least agnostics. We may

well wonder how they came to the place of supreme power. What interest they could have in maintaining the Levitical system is a fruitful subject of inquiry. Hypocrites undoubtedly they were, and clung to a ceremonial in which they no longer believed because of the emoluments of the positions to which they claimed a hereditary right.

The points on which these rulers sought for information were two:—(1) The power by which they had wrought the miracle,—and (2) The name in which they had taught. These, in themselves, might have been subjects of legitimate inquiry; and that inquiry might have been prosecuted from entirely proper motives. But this was not true of the inquisition of these Sadducean rulers.

(b) *The answering testimony,—vss. 8–12.*

This answer is voiced by Peter. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. It was given him in that hour what to say, according to the promise of their risen Lord (Matt. 10:19). What he said therefore was the voice of the Spirit.

The points to be specially noted in this answer are these five, viz—(1) The cripple of the gate had been healed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth;—(2) It was that Jesus whom they had crucified;—(3) Him had God raised from the dead;—(4) He was the stone set at nought of the builders, but made the Head of the Corner, according to the prophet-psalmist's song (Psalm 118.22);—(5) In Him alone is salvation for all who call upon Him,—"Neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."

Verses 7-10 The contrasted views of Christ.—Vs 10 Giving all the glory to God

Vs. 8 COURAGE IN THE PREACHER.

I The consciousness that he is in the right
II Feeling that the message is not his but God's
III The Divine Assurance of deliverance *from* danger, or *in* danger.

Vs 12 THE ONE ONLY WAY

I The exclusiveness of the Gospel
II. The character that supports such claims
III The hopelessness of men without the Gospel

Vs. 12. The One Saving Name.

I Salvation
II Salvation by a Person
III By a Person whose name is divinely made known
IV. Salvation is limited to that Person.—(*Martin, Rev Samuel.*)

Vs. 11. The Rejected Stone Honored.

I The Stone.
II. The Stone Rejected
III. The Stone Accepted—(*Bonar, Rev Dr. Horatius*)

Sub-section 4.—*The Release,—4 13-22.*

13 Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled, and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus 14 And, seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the Council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But that it spread no further among the people let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man, in this name 18 And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus 19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye. 20 for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard 21 And they, when they had further threatened them, let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people, for all men glorified God for that which was done 22 For the man was more than forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was wrought.

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1. *The Dilemma of the Rulers,—vss 13-14* 2 *The Executive Session,—vss 15-18* 3 *The Answer of the Apostles,—vss 19-20* 4. *The Dismissal,—vss 21-22*

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1. *The Dilemma of the Rulers,—vss. 13-14.*

The boldness of the prisoners made a deep impression on the Sanhedrin. Boldness in a good cause will usually profoundly impress even its enemies. The rulers wondered all the more, when they perceived that Peter and John were "unlearned and ignorant

men,"—i e., not that they were utterly destitute of knowledge, but that they were without the education of their schools. They were not graduates of any of their rabbinical institutions, nor enrolled among the pupils of any of their learned rabbis; and yet they spake with a cogency of reasoning, and facility of utterance, and knowledge of their sacred writings, that were amazing and irresistible

The only explanation of this phenomenon that occurred to them was the fact that they "had been with Jesus" They saw in the unlearned fisher-folk the same courage, honesty, sincerity, and fearlessness of consequences in their devotion to the truth, which they had marked in the Nazarene And they marveled at them, as before they had marveled at their Master (John 7·15). And with the cripple of the gate standing before them in the company of the disciples, wholly restored, their mouths were stopped

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Verse 13 Wondering is not believing, there is nothing saving in mere unspiritual and critical curiosity

Vs. 13 Being with Jesus

I. We cannot be with Him without being like Him
II If we have been with Jesus others will know it
III. If we are with Jesus we shall have unusual power.

Vs 13 Christian Boldness

I It was boldness for the right
II It was manly and self-sacrificing
III It was originated and sustained by fellowship with Jesus

(*The Homilist*)

Vs 13 Christ's People Imitators of Him

I What a believer should be
II. When he should be so
III. Why he should be so
IV How he should be so.—(*Spurgeon.*)

Vs. 13. Being with Jesus.

I. Giving boldness in Testimony.
II Compassion for sinners
III The exaltation of Christ.
IV. Emphasizing the need of faith.

Vs 14. Righteous Boldness

I The occasion of the courage.
II The secret of it
III The characteristics of it
1. Courtesy,—2 Prudence,—3 Frankness;—4. Fidelity
IV The effect of it—(*Johnson, Rev Dr Herrick.*)

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2 *The Executive Session,—vss 15-18.*

But something must be done. So the Council sent the prisoners out for a time, till they should determine what course to pursue They find themselves confronting three troublesome problems, viz.—(1) The undeniable fact of the miracle. This was known to everybody in the city The man was over forty years of age on whom it had been wrought. He had been a cripple from his birth, and, sitting so long at the Beautiful Gate, had become one of the most widely known persons in all Jerusalem And now he is seen to be perfectly and suddenly whole. This fact is known to every one, and it is impossible for them to call it in question;—(2) It is equally impossible for them to punish the disobedience of Peter and John, because of the high repute in which they were held by the people;—(3) Yet it is imperative that they do something to reassert their waning authority.

And this was their conclusion!—"That it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name." It was certainly a "lame and impotent conclusion!" but what more could they do?

So, they recalled the apostles, and with dire threatenings commanded them not to speak to any one, or teach and preach any more at all in the name of Jesus.

Vss. 14-18. Searing the Conscience.

I The rejection of light.
II Vain opposition to the truth of God
III Futile efforts to hinder the work of the Lord

3. *The Answer of the Apostles,—vss. 19–20.*

This answering testimony of Peter and John is quite notable. Two things, they plainly tell the Sanhedrin, must forever prevent them from complying with this command, viz.—(1) God's command, under which they were acting, must supersede any contrary human authority;—(2) Their function as witnesses bound them to the constant delivery of their testimony. "We cannot but speak the things we saw and heard." "We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen." Thus their parting word to the Council was an indirect but easily understood and solemn asseveration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Verses 19–20 The work of the Gospel admits of no evasion or compromise. Everything else must bow before its claims

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4. *The Dismissal,—vss 21–22.*

The cripple of the gate stood with the two apostles. Apparently he had shared their night behind the bars; and now with them goes forth to their reluctantly accorded freedom

Searing their consciences, and stifling conviction, the rulers sent them forth without reply,—these faithful witnesses, with renewed and emphatic, but futile, threatenings against the continuance of their work.

Verse 22 The case of an old sinner is not hopeless Late-coming mercy is oftentimes abounding mercy

Vs. 22 Lessons from the Lame Beggar's Case

I. The unsatisfying nature of all your past experience
II The unexpected blessing, just now it may be, in store for you
III. The condition on which this blessing may become yours
IV. The increasing improbabilities of your ever securing it

SUB-SECTION 5.—*The United Prayer,—4.23-31.*

23 And being let go, they came to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said unto them. 24 And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, O Lord, Thou didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: 25 who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father, David Thy servant, didst say,

Why did the Gentiles rage,
And the peoples imagine vain things?
26 The kings of the earth set themselves in array,
Against the Lord, and against his Anointed:

27 for of a truth in this city against Thy holy Servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, 28 to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel foreordained to come to pass 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings and grant unto Thy servants to speak Thy word with all boldness, 30 while Thou stretchest forth Thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Thy holy Servant Jesus 31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

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1. *The Report to their Own,—vs 23* 2 *The United Prayer,—vss 24-30* 3. *The Heavenly Answer,—vs 31.*

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1. *The Report to Their Own,—vs. 23.*

The message carried to "their own" by Peter and John had reference to what the rulers had said to them, and the command they had laid upon them. Modestly they seem to have said nothing of their own brave and fitting reply,—if indeed it be not Luke, who, having once recorded it, thinks it unnecessary to mention it again.

The report led them to prayer. Happy they who are so moved by any and all of life's perplexities!

Verse 23. Reporting to "their own" brought them tidings of their first conflict with their rulers. Many others are to follow, the issue of which only their Lord and Master foreknew.

Vs 23. COMPANY.

I Every man has his company
II Sometimes men are restrained from keeping the company of their friends
III When these restrictions are removed men return to the company of their choice —(*Taylor, Rev. Dr William M*)

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2. *The United Prayer,—vss 24–30.*

The manner of this prayer is noteworthy; viz —(1) They have but one mind,—(2) They come to God as universal Sovereign, turning thus from all human authority to the Divine;—(3) They recall the Messianic word in Psalm 2:1–2, and find in it support for their faith and reasons for praise

They recognize the opposition of their rulers as something foreseen and foretold The enmity of Herod and Pilate, and the Sanhedrin, was only carrying out the Divine Plan. Therefore they are not discouraged, and have no thought of giving up the struggle. But they are not blind to the fact that a serious conflict is impending.

Therefore they ask for two things,—(1) That on their part they may have great boldness in giving their testimony; and (2) That on His part God would grant healing power with signs and wonders in the name of His holy Servant Jesus, in confirmation of their great commission.

Verse 24 The Power above and the powers beneath —Vss 25–26 Quoting to the Lord the words of the Holy Spirit is a mighty method of prayer —Vs 28. It is a great comfort to know that even wicked men are fulfilling the counsels of God —Vs 29 The blessed work cannot stop because men oppose it,—"The story must be told"

Vs 30 THE HOLY CHILD JESUS.

I The real humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
II. That humanity as here described.
III. The glory of His Humanity.—(Spurgeon)

3. *The Heavenly Answer,—vs. 31.*

The place was mightily shaken wherein they were gathered together for this united prayer. It was a new experience, and a mighty encouragement to that praying company, that their prayers were heard by a God powerful enough to shake the frame-work of the world.

They were all filled anew with the Holy Spirit, and were enabled to speak the Word of God with all boldness. How puny and insignificant must have seemed all the oppositions of mortal men in the face of the omnipotent resources upon which they were encouraged to draw! The boldness of the witnesses was due to the shaking world, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit

Vss. 18–31 CHRISTIAN COURAGE.

I The test of the apostles' courage
II The manifestation of that courage
III The source of their courage—(*Boynton, Rev G M*)

Vss 31–32 THE BENEFIT OF UNITED PRAYER

I. The prayer they offered II. The answer they received
Simeon (*Horæ Homileticæ*).

Vs 32 A MULTITUDE IN HARMONY

I. A multitude believing the Gospel of Christ
II A multitude living in the constant exercise of prayer
III A multitude filled with the Holy Spirit
IV A multitude inspired with mutual love and concern in a time of common danger and need
V A multitude in harmony as the result of all this
(*Wagstaff, Rev F*)

SECTION 3—THE TESTIMONY OF TRUE AND FALSE WITNESSES,—4 32——5:16

SUB-SECTION 1.—*The Self-sacrificing Believers,—4 32–37*

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common 33 And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all 34 For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the

apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.

36 And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of Exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, 37 having a field, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

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1. *The powerful testimony of the apostles,—vs 33.* 2 *The effect of their preaching,—vss 32–33* 3 *The communism of the brethren,—vss 32 and 34.* 4. *Barnabas,—vss. 36–37.*

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1. *The powerful testimony of the apostles,—vs. 33.*

This testimony was not merely telling the story of the resurrection of Jesus. No special "power" would have been necessary for doing this, and only this. It was manifestly such a proclamation of the resurrection and enthronement of Jesus of Nazareth at the right hand of the Father as made all earthly concernments seem comparatively trivial. It was a preaching that put supreme emphasis upon spiritual and eternal things.

Verse 33 The position of these words indicates that the love, unity, and self-sacrifice, even to the parting with worldly goods and possessions, grew out of the preaching of the resurrection of Christ Why? What was there in this teaching likely to produce this result? Was it not the all-dominating influence of spiritual things, growing out of a profound realization that their Lord, so lately among them their companion, teacher, guide, and friend, was indeed the risen and exalted Saviour, Son of God?

Vs. 33 CONSEQUENCES OF THE RESURRECTION.

I If Christ rose, His Supreme Deity is an eternal verity.
II. If He rose, there can be no controversy about the reality and sufficiency of His atoning sacrifice.
III. If he rose, we have a Divine Seal to the truth and value of the Old Testament
IV. If He rose, the rewards and retributions of the future life are an awful certainty.

2. *The effect of their preaching,—vss. 32–33.*

Great grace was given to all the disciples. Under the circumstances these words evidently mean that their progress in holy living and the triumph of gracious principles in their hearts became more and more manifest. This reign of grace among them and over them showed itself in the spirit of love and concord which pervaded the entire body of believers. They were of "one heart and one mind."

Vs 33 The Happy State of the Primitive Church.

I Great Grace appeared in their united supplications
II Also in their steadfast adherence to the apostles' doctrine
III Also in a constant adherence to the worship and service of God
IV. Also in their great love one to another.
V Also in their fullness of holy joy
VI Also in their spirit and deportment before the world

(*The Preacher*)

Vs 33 The Witnesses' Testimony.

I Their testimony was with "great power" by reason of the great number bearing witness.
II Also by reason of their well-known character
III Also in that there were among them consistence, boldness, and correspondent behavior
IV Also in that they brought to their support the types and statutes ordained of God of this great thing to come
V Also in that it left His adversaries destitute of any satisfaction or reasonable replication
VI Also in that it was accompanied with the confirmation and blessing of God, and produced great and extensive conviction

(*Bishop Dehon.*)

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3 *The communism of the brethren,—vss. 32 and 34.*

We had a glimpse of this subject in the second chapter. It is now time, and this is the place, to consider it more at length. No adequate consideration can be given to it, without reference to other passages of Scripture, in connection with this episode in the development of the Church. They are such as these, which the reader is requested to search out and ponder, viz.—Acts 2:44–45,—

5:4,—6:1,—I Tim., 5.8,—6:6–10, and 6.17–18. From the passage before us, illuminated by these Scriptures, the following points are clear, viz.—(1) The distribution of worldly goods was the result of the prevalence of a spirit of universal love and concord among believers;—(2) It was a temporary expedient to meet an extraordinary and urgent, but probably not long-continued, necessity;—(3) The personal right to property was distinctly recognized, as we shall soon see more definitely; and the evidence is not clear that all believers cast all their resources into the common treasury Mary, the mother of John Mark, e. g., had a house of her own in Jerusalem (12 12); so Philip the evangelist had his, at a later period, in Cæsarea (21·8), and Mnason of Cyprus seems to have had one in Jerusalem, for with him Paul and his companions were to lodge on their final return to the Holy City (21 16),—(4) Distribution was made, as would seem, not to every member of the believing brotherhood, but only to such of them as were in need;—(5) The duty of the Church to care for the poor of her membership was thus made perfectly clear;—(6) The Diaconate or deaconship was instituted for this very purpose

The lessons of this episode among primitive believers for the modern Church are equally plain, viz—(1) Christian people ought not to need to join mutual benefit orders and benevolent associations, made up indiscriminately of believers and unbelievers, to get help in the day of their distresses They ought to be able to find that help in the loving company of their fellow-believers,—(2) That such provision may lead many to join the Church merely for "the loaves and the fishes" is doubtless true, and extraordinary safeguards must ever be provided against such a hypocritical abuse of the Church's liberality, nevertheless the obligation resting upon the household of faith to care for "her own" is imperative,—(3)—Distribution must be governed now, as in earlier times, by one consideration alone,—the being in need,—(4) "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat",—(5) If he works, he should have the due reward of his toil

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Verse 32. "The things that he possessed" seems to recognize personal rights in property—Vss 34–35 "As many as were possessors, etc," are words to be explained in the light of other Scriptures, as e g 12 12.

4. *Barnabas,—vss. 36–37*

His nativity:—he was born in Cyprus. He was one of the Jews of the dispersion

His name.—The apostles called him a "Son of exhortation,"—or, as the Authorized Version reads it, a "Son of consolation." It is not an easy word to translate by a single English term. It was given him probably because he had that gift of public speech which had in it an unusually large element of both strength and comfort

His conduct in this emergency is notable His course is mentioned perhaps as a single illustration of what may have been quite common, and possibly to set forth his self-devotion in contrast with the self-seeking of Ananias and Sapphira There are two suggestive reasons why his case is probably specified, viz.—(1) He was himself a sojourner in Jerusalem,—a Cypriote by birth,—and in a position therefore to sympathize with those who had been detained in the city by the wonderful events of the new era, and who by this unexpected stay were stranded, their resources being exhausted,—(2) He, perhaps first of all, sold his land to help his brethren Luke does not tell us where the land was; and it is of no consequence for us to know whether it was in Jerusalem or Cyprus To a Jew of the earlier day the selling of his land would have been the last supreme act of self-sacrificing devotion Peter Bayne, in "The Days of Jezebel," has pictured, in the words of Naboth, the attachment of the people to their divinely allotted inheritance.—

> "This is the cause why none may sell his land,—
> Our Lord is gracious and compassionate,
> His justice, from its equal wings outspread
> In blessings o'er the land, sheds dews of love;
> And He would have us nestle to our homes,
> And hold them as our special gift from Him,
> So that while, gliding by our pleasant hills,
> The quiet waters linger in our vales,
> While breaks the gleam of many flowers,
> In dazzling sheen, beneath the sky of spring,
> While lilies blow, while olives bear their fruit,
> While vine-leaves cling about the cottage porch,
> Their voices shall be ever in our ears,
> As of a thousand angel-witnesses,
> In delicate acclaim, reminding us

Of our dear father's kindness. It may be
That other lands bear statelier crowns of palm,
More wealth of yellow corn, and loidlier bloom
Of flowers resplendent, but could any be
So sweet to us, so moving to our hearts,
So musical with tenderest memories,
As the dear land that we have always known,
The fig-tree up to which our mothers held
Our little hands, when we were in their arms?
The very vine from which, with trembling joy,
We culled a cluster ere we went, at eve,
To see the maiden of our earliest love?
Ah, no! Our Father knoweth that no place
Can tell so much of Him as home"—(Act IV, Scene 2)

Something of this old spirit doubtless still lingered in apostolic days. But Barnabas, preëminent in self-sacrifice, was ready to lead his brethren even in this supreme devotion, to meet the sudden and unlooked-for emergency. He was every way worthy to be singled out among those who made such a sacrifice of their most precious things for the common good.

Vss 36–37 GREAT-MINDED BARNABAS

His relations
I To his brethren in the communal system,—4 36–37
II. To the new and wonderful developments at Antioch,—11 23–24
III. To the apostle Paul,—9 27 and 11 25

SUB-SECTION 2—*The Self-seeking Hypocrites,—5 1–11*

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession, 2 and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost and great fear came upon all that heard it 6 And the young men arose and wrapped him round, and carried him out and buried him

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in, 8 and Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much And she answered, Yea, for so much. 9 But Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord? behold the feet of them that have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out 10 And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband 11 And great fear came upon the whole Church, and upon all that heard these things

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1 *The sin of these hypocrites,—vss 1-3* 2. *The explanation of their sin.* 3 *The exposure of their sin,—vss 4-9* 4 *The punishment of their sin,—vss 5 and 9*

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1. *The sin of these hypocrites,—vss. 1-3.*

It was an aggravated case of lying, under circumstances that made it particularly heinous in the sight of God.

It was lying, not to men, but to God,—against the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth. This distribution of worldly goods was made under the direct influence of the Spirit of God To seek to circumvent the arrangement, while professing to carry it out, was deliberate and shameful lying to the Holy Spirit.

It was also a sin against the testimony of the witnesses. Through that powerful testimony the disciples had been led to this extraordinary manifestation of practical Christian love

Vss 1-10 THE VICE OF SPEECH

I. Agricultural falsehoods.
II Commercial lies.
III Social lies
IV Ecclesiastical lies.—(*Talmage, Rev Dr T. DeWitt.*)

Vss 1-11. ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

I. The character of their sin
II The origin of it
III. The discovery of it
IV. The punishment of it—(*Atwood, Rev E S*)

Vss. 1–11. Ananias and Sapphira.

I. The Scene. II. The Sin. III. The Motive. IV. The Punishment.

Vs. 2. Withholding a Part.

I. It was a purely voluntary service.
II. Theirs was a lie amidst abounding mercies.
III. Compare Ananias with Achan.

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2. *The explanation of their sin.*

All sin is folly, and oftentimes inexplicable. But sometimes it is possible for us to trace the probable causes of transgression. It is so here. Their sin was due (1) To an inordinate love of praise, and the desire to be thought well of by others,—(2) To an inordinate love of money and material possessions; and (3) To the absence of an all-conquering and self-forgetting love of the brotherhood of believers.

There was but one way in which they could gratify the first without sacrificing the second,—that was by a course of agreed hypocrisy. All hypocrisy has in it an element of premeditation. No one becomes a hypocrite suddenly, and, so to speak, thoughtlessly. One must contrive and plan, if one would be a hypocrite.

In the case of Ananias and Sapphira there was the additional element of conspiracy. They two had evidently talked the matter over, planned it out, and agreed together upon a course, by which, as they supposed, they would be able to keep at least a part of their possessions, and at the same time secure the good opinion of the Church and its leaders, as truly as Barnabas,—of whose good repute among the brethren they may have been somewhat envious.

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3. *The exposure of their sin,—vss. 4–9.*

It is hardly necessary to suppose that Peter had received any divine intimation of what Ananias and Sapphira were doing. It is not easy for even one person, planning to do wrong, to conceal his purpose. But for two to enter upon an agreed course of wicked-

ness is much more difficult, and it is almost impossible for them to cover their tracks It was probably so here. Peter had, as seems likely, observed something in their manner, which led him to suspect that they were acting crookedly.

He takes therefore a favorable opportunity to examine them separately Yet he asks them no question which an honest person would have any difficulty in answering. But in the asking he brings into the light the enormity of their sin. The land had been their own Their right and title to it could not have been called in question They had a perfect right to sell it if they wished; but they were not compelled to do so There was no compulsion whatsoever in this community of goods And when the land had been sold, the money,—price of the same,—was still theirs of absolute right It was their right also to bring only a part to the common treasury, and to retain the remainder for their own private use They were under no obligation, but that of love, to bring all of it But they had brought only a part, wishing it to be thought the whole They had agreed together to do this Their sin was no sudden and desperate clinging to a vanishing treasure, but a planned and deliberate counting out so much for the common fund, and so much for themselves, meaning all the time to give the impression that they were giving up all they had in the world, and hoping, as it would seem, to be esteemed self-sacrificingly liberal, and to be exalted by the Church to the high plane occupied by Barnabas and others, as those who had given up even their homes for the common weal So they came to God with a lie in their right hand They had sold themselves to work this wickedness

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4 *The punishment of their sin,—vss 5 and 9*

This punishment was condign, immediate and terrible If we are disposed to think this punishment unduly severe, a number of considerations may lead us to revise our judgment

For one thing, their sin was the flaunting of a lie in the very face of the Almighty God of truth It was like the sin of Nadab and Abihu, with their strange fire on the altar, without their probable excuse of drunkenness.

For another thing, their sin was, in a special and flagrant degree, dishonoring to the Holy Spirit of purity and truth.

And, once more, the contagion of avarice had a specially favorable field in this communal system; and it was imperative to rebuke, with unrelenting sternness, the first manifestation of it among the brotherhood of believers.

So these lying hypocrites were suddenly cut off. And great fear came upon the whole Church, and upon all who heard these things.

SUB-SECTION 3—*Works of Mercy and Healing,—5 12–16*

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people, and they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. 13 But of the rest durst no man join himself to them: howbeit the people magnified them, 14 and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 15 insomuch that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that, as Peter came by, at least his shadow might overshadow some one of them 16 And there also came together the multitude from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folk, and them that were vexed with unclean spirits and they were healed every one

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1 *The public assemblies of believers,—vss 12–13* 2 *The extraordinary miracles,—vss 12–15* 3 *The great growth of the Church,—vs 14*

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1. *The public assemblies of believers,—vss 12–13.*

The place of meeting was in Solomon's Porch. They needed it to accommodate their increasing numbers. It was to many of them doubtless a place hallowed by sweet memories of Peter's powerful and tender sermon on the occasion of the healing of the cripple of the gate.

These assemblies were characterized by an unusual solemnity. Since the judgment and destruction of the hypocrites they must have realized, as never before, that they were in the presence of the heart-searching God.

These public assemblies were marked also by the pervading influences of a holy love and sweet concord.

2. *The extraordinary miracles,—vss. 12–15.*

An unusual number of signs and wonders were wrought at this time by the apostles; and they were all works of healing. The prayer of the disciples (4:30) had been answered in a remarkable way. And people thronged the city from the regions round about, to share in the blessings sent down from the Great Physician.

Many of these miracles were wrought in peculiar and strange methods. When God wishes, He can make Peter's shadow, and handkerchiefs and aprons from Paul's body (19:12), alike effective channels of healing power.

They were wrought no doubt, as was the miracle at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth; and so were irrefutable evidences of the resurrection of our Lord, and of His enthronement at the right hand of Sovereign Power on High!

Verse 15 The avenues to superstition are always open To many Peter's shadow might easily become more interesting than Peter's message On the other hand, in seasons of religious interest, the Holy Spirit may use the most trivial thing to awaken men "That man preaches the Gospel in the way he crosses the street," was said of a faithful minister The appearance of evangelists in a thoroughfare, during a protracted meeting, has been known to awaken conviction among careless onlookers—Vs 16 Note the compassion and condescending mercy of the risen Christ The prophecy was still fulfilled,—"Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases" Through bodily healing life from the dead came to many souls

Vs 15 OUR UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE.

I Every one exerts an unconscious influence
II Our unconscious influence is the most important and mighty that we exert
III For our unconscious influence we are most solemnly responsible
IV. We may all cast healing shadows, if we will—(*The Treasury.*)

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3. *The great growth of the Church,—vs. 14.*

In the atmosphere of love and harmony, in which the brethren lived, the Divine Spirit found a congenial sphere for His gracious work; and a great multitude of both men and women came to believe, and identified themselves with the household of faith.

The people generally magnified the company of believers; while unbelievers stood in awe of them, and durst not join themselves to them

SECTION 4—THE TESTIMONY OF THE PRISONERS,—5 17–42

17 But the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy, 18 and laid hands on the apostles, and put them in public ward 19 But an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them out, and said, 20 Go ye, and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life 21 And when they heard this, they entered into the temple about day-break, and taught But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison-house to have them brought 22 But the officers that came found them not in the prison, and they returned, and told, 23 saying, The prison-house we found shut in all safety, and the keepers standing at the doors· but when we had opened, we found no man within 24 Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priest heard these words, they were much perplexed concerning them whereunto this would grow 25 And there came one and told them, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are in the temple standing and teaching the people 26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them, but without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council And the high priest asked them, 28 saying, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us 29 But Peter and the apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging Him on a tree 31 Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. 32 And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey Him

33 But they, when they heard this, were cut to the heart, and were minded to slay them 34 But there stood up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in honor of all the people, and commanded to put the men forth a little while 35 And he said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves as touching these men, what ye are about to do 36 For before these days rose up Theudas, giving himself out to be somebody, to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves who was slain, and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed, and came to nought 37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the enrollment, and drew away some of the people after him he also perished, and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad 38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone for if this

counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown, 39 but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them, lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God

40 And to him they agreed; and when they had called the apostles unto them, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go 41 They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. 42 And every day in the temple and at home they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ

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1 *The imprisonment and deliverance,—vss 17–21a* 2 *The rearrest and arraignment,—vss 21b–28* 3 *The answer of the prisoners,—vss. 29–32.* 4 *Gamaliel's counsel,—vss 33–39* 5 *The release,—vss 40–42*

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1. *The imprisonment and deliverance,—vss. 17–21a.*

The same enemies confront the witnesses as were met before by Peter and John. The Sadducees, by virtue of their belief, or disbelief, must needs war against the preaching of the risen Nazarene They were filled with "jealousy," or zeal; and zeal in a bad cause makes an implacable foe.

A certain measure of autonomy seems to have belonged to the Sanhedrin under the Roman Government. So the rulers silenced the witnesses again, not by argument, but by arbitrary power But these rulers confronted more than the fisher-folk of Galilee. God was a factor in the new era, with whom they had not counted on reckoning. And it was He who sent His angel to open the prison doors, and to renew their commission.

The Temple Courts furnished the witnesses a pulpit, and a congregation as well Those who assembled thus early could not perhaps attend at the hour of morning prayer; but the gracious Lord would not have them overlooked. The eventide message had been one of peace (4:3); the morning voice is to be one of life (5:20–21).

Verse 19 "God delivers us from trouble, not that we may take our ease, but that we may enter more earnestly upon His work"—(*Henry*)

Vs. 20. THE EVANGELISTIC COMMISSION.

I "Go ye" Those who need to be evangelized will not come to you Ye must go to them

II. "Stand" The salvation of men is not a work you can sit down to in an easy-going effort. Jesus Himself "sat" and taught His believing followers But when He would reach the unsaved, He "stood and cried, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.'"

III "All the words of this life" Life from the dead is in the word which we preach It is life through the atoning Christ We are to proclaim the whole message,—"all the words of this life"

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2. *The rearrest and arraignment,—vss. 21b–28.*

The narrative here presents two vivid and suggestive pictures, viz.—(1) The faithful witnesses in the early dawn proclaiming Jesus and the Resurrection,—preaching "all the words of this life," in the precincts of the temple,—and (2) The rulers of the people in grand council assembled, vainly waiting for their prisoners, and later astounded by the report of their escape from jail

These witnesses had invisible defenders in the risen Saviour whom they preached, and also in the esteem of the common people, so that even the authorities did not dare to offer them any violence.

The charge on which the prisoners were arraigned embraced three specifications, viz.—(1) Disobedience to authority,—(2) Filling the city with their unauthorized doctrine;—and (3) The purposing to bring the blood of the Nazarene upon the heads of their rulers. They had, indeed, before Pilate said, "His blood be on us and on our children," but the imprecation was proving a heavier burden than they were able or willing to bear.

Vs 25 DUTY, NOT CONSEQUENCES.

I Their duty.

II Their decision

III Their disregard of consequences —(*Hallock, Rev. Dr. G B F.*)

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3. *The answer of the prisoners,—vss. 29–32.*

This answer emphasizes the law and the facts in the case:—(1) The law was plain,—so plain that in other circumstances even the rulers themselves must have admitted it, i. e., No ordinance

of man can bind the conscience in opposition to the command of God,—"We must obey God rather than man";—(2) The facts were equally incontrovertible. God had raised from the dead that Jesus of Nazareth whom they had crucified.

They go further than the bare attestation of the facts. They proclaim the Nazarene as the exalted Saviour;—"Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins."

Of these extraordinary facts they solemnly avow themselves the Divinely appointed witnesses.

An additional element of apostolic teaching at this point was the concurring witness of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit of truth could not attest a lie; and His manifest presence among the disciples was a demonstration of the resurrection and enthronement of the Son of God "We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

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4. *Gamaliel's counsel,—vss. 33-39.*

This Rabbi was a Pharisee in an assembly that seemed to be largely Sadducean. He was both wise and politic; and his counsel was in accord with their Sadducean indifference. So it met with general favor.

He fortifies his counsel, however, with some recent historical instances,—the cases of Theudas and Judas, false teachers and presumptuous leaders, whose schemes had come to nought And his citation of these cases gave the impression that he believed that the end would not be different in the matter before them.

As a Pharisee Gamaliel could not have had the objection of the Sadducees to the preaching of the doctrine of the resurrection and a future life But he was wise enough to see that in this controversy the Sanhedrin was losing ground. He would save their authoritative position by letting matters drift awhile, and waiting to see what this new movement would come to. If it came to nothing, they would lose nothing by a do-nothing policy. And if it were of God, they would not be found in an untenable and disastrous position.

It was counsel that did credit to Gamaliel's astuteness. But all the same it was woefully defective. It was not a time for an

attitude of indifference, especially in one holding a position of influence and power. With his prepossessions in favor of the doctrine of the resurrection, he might have been expected to give the testimony of the witnesses at least a candid and earnest, if not favorable, consideration And just now especially, and to him particularly, were the Lord's words solemnly applicable,—"He that is not with me is against me."

We can hardly refrain from the question—Did Gamaliel have a faint suspicion and lingering hope that the Nazarene might prove to be the long-looked-for Messiah? We cannot but wonder! And we cannot but wish that a teacher so learned in the Divine law, at whose feet sat even Paul as a learner,—that Paul who came to see the law as a child-leader to bring him to the Christ,—might himself have seen in Jesus the gracious fulfillment of the law and promises of the God of his fathers!

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5 *The release,—vss 40–42*

This dismissal is attended by a flagrant act of tyranny and injustice on the part of the Council They scourged the apostles; and then renewed their vain prohibition, and drove them from the Council Hall.

On the part of the disciples their going forth was one of joy It was to them a scource of gladness and cause of thanksgiving that they were counted worthy to suffer for the NAME!

Every day, therefore, in the temple and at home they continued their work with increasing diligence and power. Notwithstanding the interdict of the Sanhedrin, they ceased not from their Divine Commission to teach and preach Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, and His triumphant resurrection and enthronement at the right hand of God.

Vs. 41 PRIMITIVE HEROISM.

I The bitter antagonism of men to the truth, as seen in their desperate attempt to arrest its progress in the world.

The disciples had

1 The social status
2 The legal might
3 The mental power
4 The sympathy of numbers
5 And antiquity

} all against them

II. The sublime heroism of holy men for the truth, as seen in their determined labors to accelerate its progress in the world.
1 The nature of their heroism
(1) They could endure pain
(2) They could endure shame
(3) They could brave dangers
2 The secret of their heroism
(1) Witnesses of facts.
(2) Filled with the Holy Spirit
(3) Inspired by a mighty Name.—(*The Homilist*)

SECTION 5—THE TESTIMONY OF STEPHEN,—6 1——7.60

SUB-SECTION 1—*The rise of the proto-martyr, and the institution of the diaconate,—6 1-8*

1 Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration 2 And the Twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables 3 Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business 4 But we will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch, 6 whom they set before the apostles and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them

7 And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly, and a great company of priests were obedient to the faith 8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people

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1. *The occasion of the diaconate,—vs 1 2 The object of it,—vss 2-4. 3 The establishment of it.—vss 5-6. 4 The effect of it,—vss 7-8.*

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1. *The occasion of the diaconate,—vs. 1.*

The narrative seems to bring us an echo of the difficulties attending the system of a community of goods. The breaking down of the communal system was sure to follow when self-interest usurped the place of love.

The members of the believing community resident in Jerusalem, being more numerous, probably contributed the larger part of the common fund; and while they were in all probability less needy than the foreigners and sojourners, they may have felt themselves entitled to the larger share of that fund in the general distribution. Hence the murmuring of the foreigners, "because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."

The poor widow's lot, then as now, was a hard one. To such therefore the Lord has been pleased to give special promises of help and deliverance.

Verse 1 The Saviour's method was to "teach and feed" (Mark 6 34 and 37), sometimes the Church must "feed and teach."—Vs. 1 Unregulated benevolence often breeds trouble and dissension

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2. The object of it,—vss 2-4.

God often fulfills His promises to His needy children through the instrumentality of others of His followers. Our duty is not less obligatory for His promises So the apostles believed; and so at their suggestion the diaconate was instituted. They sought to accomplish two ends by this plan,—(1) The care of the Church's poor was attended to; and (2) The work of evangelization was carried forward without interruption.

The ever-pertinent lesson is that the poor of Christ's flock must be faithfully cared for. They must never be allowed to suffer the shame and mortification of becoming a charge upon unbelievers Charitable institutions, however well equipped and wisely conducted, can never take the place of the personal, loving, and sympathetic ministrations of believing men ordained and set apart to look after the interests of the believing poor.

But, while this work, requiring the services of men of faith and full of the Spirit, is cared for, the great work of winning men to Christ, through the preaching of a crucified and risen Saviour, must be pushed forward with consecrated zeal and diligence. So the apostles believed and ordained. From this great work the

witnesses will not turn aside,—"We will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word."

Verses 2-4. Serving tables is a legitimate work, but it must not usurp the place of prayer and the ministry of the word. When the Church's energies are absorbed in caring for the temporal comfort of the people, she is in danger of neglecting "the great commission."—Vs 2 The minister cannot be expected to do everything: there is a place for the deacon and the sexton.

Vs 2 DISTRACTIONS IN A BUSY MINISTRY.

I. Their subtlety and power. They often seem so lawful and necessary
II. The only safeguard against them. Putting first things first. The single eye
III. The proper use of the help of others This is better than to do without such help, even if at first sight it may seem more troublesome.

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3. *The establishment of it,—vss. 5-6.*

The whole company of believers approved the plan suggested by their leaders, and participated in the election of the men, who from their office and duty came to be known as Deacons. They were, in a special sort of way and for a particular service, the representatives of the people.

They were ordained and set apart by the apostles, with prayer and the laying on of hands. This is the first New Testament record of such setting apart to holy office and duty.

Verse 5 The Church may trust her Divine Head for guidance in the choice of her officers —Vs 5 Fullness of the Spirit and fullness of faith must always go together The Spirit will not come with filling power into a doubting heart When we take Christ in faith with our whole heart, the gracious Spirit will take us with the infinite plenitude of His all-embracing mercy —Vss 5-6. The temporalities of the Church are best managed by the leading men A deacon, no less than an elder, ought to be eminent for piety —Ordination ought always to be more than a mere form.

4. *The effect of it,—vss 7-8*

The number of believers increased greatly And, what was specially notable, a great number of the "priests became obedient to the faith" They were daily occupied in the services of the temple, and had such opportunities of hearing the testimony of the witnesses that, despite the opposition of the high priest and the Sanhedrin, they came to believe and accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ of God!

Great miracles also were wrought before the people, especially by the hand of Stephen, chiefest, as would seem, of the board of deacons These men were not precluded by the peculiar duties of their office from participating in the ministry of evangelization, if they were otherwise qualified for it. And Stephen was extraordinarily gifted, and spoke with great power He was not, indeed, one of the original witnesses, but he proclaimed with irresistible cogency the resurrection of the Nazarene, and the mighty meaning of the new age!

Verse 7 Organization may be so thorough and detailed as to endanger life and strangle spontaneity, but when it removes discontent and multiplies brotherly affection it is the sure precursor of enlarged prosperity—Vs 7 It is sometimes a duty to break away from appointed leadership The priests in the temple were right in following the fisher-folk of Galilee rather than the high priest and the Great Council—Vs 8 He, who in 6 5 is spoken of as "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit," is here described as "full of grace and power," and in 6 10 is so "full of wisdom and the Spirit" as to be irresistible to those who opposed him Fullness of faith, grace, power, and wisdom come from the infilling of the Holy Spirit

Vs 7 GOOD EARNESTS OF GREAT SUCCESS.

I The means by which spiritual prosperity may be procured
II The results of such prosperity
III The alternative which is before every Church, either to attain such prosperity, or else mourn over grievous evils—(*Spurgeon*)

SUB-SECTION 2—*Stephen's Controversy with the Foreign Jews,—6 9-15*

9 But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen

10 And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by

which he spake 11 Then they suborned men, who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and seized him, and brought him into the Council, 13 and set up false witnesses, who said, This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us 15 And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel

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1 *Stephen's opponents,—vs 9.* 2 *Their machinations,—vss 10–11* 3 *His arraignment,—vss 12–15*

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1 *Stephen's opponents,—vs. 9*

Among the foreigners sojourning in Jerusalem were representatives from divers places, notably Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia. They were all Jews of the "Dispersion" The fact that all of them were strangers in their national capital bound them together, though they had come from so many different places · and they constituted themselves into a synagogue, and called themselves —or were called by others—the synagogue of the Libertines,— probably because the larger number of them had been slaves in Rome, but freed and banished by command of Tiberius It is thought by some that each of these nationalities had a synagogue, and by others that there were two, or at most three, mentioned by Luke and both opinions are supposed to be countenanced by the rabbinical tradition that there were from four hundred and sixty to four hundred and eighty synagogues in the city. But when we remember that Jerusalem was a very compactly built city, in its widest area never exceeding one hundred and eighty acres, and in its most populous day having probably less than 75,000 people in its resident citizenship, it is safe to relegate the tradition to the region of the mythical, and to revert to the original idea, countenanced by the Revised Version, that there was one synagogue in which all the foreign Jews were gathered together. These were Stephen's opponents, and, as it proved, his deadly enemies

Why such opposition in such a quarter? It is not easy to say Possibly they were first brought into antagonistic relations to him

in the daily ministrations of the communal funds Or it may have been that they had come to entertain an extravagant and exaggerated attachment to the Temple Services, just because, for the greater part of their lives, they had been deprived of them. It is easy to see, too, how they might be offended by the simplicity of the new Church's Services, in contrast with the more elaborate and imposing ceremonial of their Holy House.

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2. *Their machinations,—vss 10–11*

These enemies could not stand against the wisdom, and the Spirit, with which Stephen spake. Therefore they followed the example of their rulers, and determined to silence him with the strong arm of authority

Nor were they at all scrupulous as to the way in which they should accomplish the ruin of their adversary They misrepresented and perverted his teaching "They suborned men, who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God" "And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and seized him, and brought him into the Council"

The frequent resort of conscious weakness and wrong in controversy is to misrepresentation and duplicity The candid and open mind will accept even unpalatable truth by whomsoever spoken

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3. *His arraignment,—vss. 12–15.*

The charge made against Stephen in these words, and on which he was haled before the council, had a measure of truth in it. He had not, indeed, spoken blasphemously against God and Moses But he had doubtless taught that a new order of things was coming in, and that with the development of a more spiritual religion the time would come, of which Jesus had spoken to the woman of Samaria, when "neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem will men worship the Father" The special sacredness of the Holy City would then disappear, the Temple would be no more a place of

holy worship, and the sacrifices of the altar, having lost their significance, would be abandoned. In this way "the customs which Moses had delivered them" would be changed.

Stephen had a wider vision of the new era on which they were entering, and of the inevitable consequences of the new teaching, than many even of the believing brotherhood And it is not difficult to see how his reasoning might be misunderstood even by his fellow-disciples, and could hardly fail to be misinterpreted by his enemies as foretelling dire calamity to Israel and their Holy City and Temple.

Verse 14 Clinging to the form is not necessarily being imbued with the spirit —Vs 14 Change in the outward and non-essential is the evidence of life,—the condition of growth and progress —Vs 15 The transforming power of a lofty faith It glorifies even the body, and puts a halo on the human countenance —Vs 15 There were three men in the Bible whose faces shone,—Moses, Jesus, and Stephen,—(*Moody*) —When the Jews accused Stephen of blaspheming Moses, the Lord lit up his face with the same glory with which Moses' face shone —(*Moody, quoting Bonar*)

SUB-SECTION 3 —*Stephen's defence before the Council,—7. 1-60*

1 And the high priest said, Are these things so? 2 And he said, Brethren and fathers, hearken

The Age of the Patriarchs

The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, 3 and said unto him, Get thee out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee 4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in the land of Haran, and from thence, when his father was dead God removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell 5 and he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on, and He promised that He would give it to him in possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child 6 And God spake on this wise, that his seed should sojourn in a strange land, and that they should bring them into bondage, and treat them ill, four hundred years 7 And the nation to which they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God and after that they shall come forth, and serve me in this place 8 And He gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs. 9 And the patriarchs, moved with jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt and God was with him, 10 and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wis-

dom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house 11 Now there came a famine over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers found no sustenance 12 But, when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent forth our fathers the first time 13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren, and Joseph's kindred became manifest unto Pharaoh 14 And Joseph sent, and called to him Jacob his father, and all his kindred, three-score and fifteen souls 15 And Jacob went down into Egypt and he died, himself, and our fathers, 16 and they were carried over unto Shechem, and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a price in silver of the sons of Hamor in Shechem

The Age of Moses

17 But, as the time of the promise drew nigh which God vouchsafed unto Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, 18 till there arose another king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph 19 The same dealt craftily with our race, and ill-treated our fathers, that they should cast out their babes to the end they might not live 20 At which season Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and he was nourished three months in his father's house, 21 and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son 22 And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and works 23 But when he was well-nigh forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel 24 And, seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, smiting the Egyptian 25 and he supposed that his brethren understood that God by His hand was giving them deliverance, but they understood not 26 And the day following he appeared unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another? 27 But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Wouldst thou kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian yesterday? 29 And Moses fled at this saying, and became a sojourner in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons

The Calling of Moses

30 And when forty years were fulfilled, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush 31 And when Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight and as he drew near to behold, there came the voice of the Lord, 32 I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob And Moses trembled, and durst not behold 33 And the Lord said unto him, Loose the shoes from thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground 34 I have surely seen the affliction of my people that is in Egypt and have heard their groaning, and I am come down to deliver them and now come, I will send thee into Egypt

Israel's Dealings with Moses and with God

35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge, him hath God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the hand

of the angel that appeared to him in the bush 36 This man led them forth, having wrought wonders and signs in Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years 37 This is that Moses, who said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me 38 This is he that was in the Church in the wilderness with the angel that spake to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers who received living oracles to give unto us 39 to whom our fathers would not be obedient, but thrust him from them, and turned back in their hearts unto Egypt, 40 saying unto Aaron, Make us gods that shall go before us for, as for this Moses, who led us forth out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him, 41 and they made a calf in those days, and brought a sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their hands 42 But God turned and gave them up to serve the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets,

Did ye offer me slain beasts and sacrifices
Forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?
43 And ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch,
And the star of the god Rephan,
The figures which ye made to worship them
And I will carry you away beyond Babylon

From the Post-Mosaic Age to That of Stephen

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness, even as He appointed who spake unto Moses, that he should make it according to the figure that he had seen 45 Which also our fathers, in their turn, brought in with Joshua when they entered on the possession of the nations, that God thrust out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David, 46 who found favor in the sight of God, and asked to find a habitation for the God of Jacob 47 But Solomon built him a house 48 Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in Houses made with hands, as saith the prophet,

49 The heaven is my throne,
And the earth the footstool of my feet
What manner of house will ye build me? saith the Lord
Or what is the place of my rest?
50 Did not My hand make all these things?

51 Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did, so do ye 52 Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before of the coming of the Righteous One, of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers, 53 ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not

54 Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth 55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56 and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God 57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed

upon him with one accord, 58 and they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge And when he had said this, he fell asleep

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1 *The supernatural history* 2 *The permanent in the perishable* 3 *The Divine mercy set over against Israel's sins* 4 *The martyrdom of the faithful witness.*

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1. *The supernatural history*

A careful study of Stephen's defence will reveal the three lines of thought above indicated, not indeed set forth in distinct and separate heads, and none of the three elaborated in detail, yet all combining together to make a profound impression, and well-nigh irresistible

At first sight the great apology seems to be an irrelevant and needlessly prolix rehearsal of Israel's history Stephen was guided in his defence, we cannot doubt, by the Holy Spirit, and he conducted it in this way, partly perhaps to conciliate his judges To some of them it was a wonderful story, and they would listen to it with great delight And even the Sadducean portion of the Council, though they might discount the supernatural features of the story, would yet hear the eloquent rehearsal with tolerance and attention

Stephen therefore gained his audience But he aimed to accomplish more than simply to minister to the patriotic pride of the Council. Speaking to a court, the majority of which probably did not believe in the resurrection, "neither angel nor spirit," and who probably had no use for anything superhuman, he began with laying a broad foundation for the supernatural occurrences which had offended his judges, by bringing out the undeniable fact that the entire history of Israel had been a supernatural history. His opening sentence strikes the keynote of his theme. It was the "God of glory" who originated the nation of Israel. He traces this thought through four great epochs of their national career,—

(1) In patriarchal times, in his dealings with Abraham The migrations of the patriarch were not the aimless wanderings of a

nomadic chief, but the movements of a man of God under Divine direction;—

(2) In the period of transition from the family to the nation, with Joseph as the central figure and leader in the earlier and determinative period of that transition. It was Jehovah who used the schemes of wicked men to bring Joseph, through the gateway of trial, to the place of supreme power in Egypt, and through Joseph to transfer Israel from Canaan to Goshen, that they might have opportunity to grow from the family to the tribe, and from the tribe to the nation;—

(3) In the period of the bondage and deliverance by the hand of Moses It was Divine Providence that led to the rearing of Moses in the Court of Pharaoh. It was the God of their fathers who appeared to Moses in the flaming bush. It was God, who from cloud-capped and burning Sinai gave to Moses the living oracles, and the pattern of the Tabernacle of the Testimony, and revealed to him the coming and personality of the Messiah,—the prophet like unto himself;—

(4) In the more perfect establishment of the ancient worship under David and Solomon It was a Divine provision that the Tabernacle should give way to the Temple. And God, "who dwelleth not in houses made with hands," condescended to fill with His glory the Temple of Solomon,—the Prince of Peace!

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2. *The permanent in the perishable*

Thus may we express another line of thought covertly running through all this masterly apology The charge made against Stephen, it must be remembered, was the preaching of a change in "the customs which Moses had delivered to them" His answer is practically a confession of judgment, and a plea in extenuation and justification.

True religion, he would tell his judges, had flourished more or less through all their history independent of its outward form, and had survived all the changes in the external habiliments in which it had been clothed. Upon this view of the truth Stephen is not outspoken; but his line of thought though apparently veiled is nevertheless quite plain. In the theophanies of the fathers,—and in the dreams of the coming Viceroy of Egypt,—and in the burning

bush and flaming mount,—and in the Tabernacle and Temple, the outer form and shell of religion had been changed again and again, but the inner life and spirit of it had survived all external vicissitudes, and had continued to flourish among the true Israel, even down to their own day And so it would ever be Stephen claimed only to have preached the ongoing of a development that had proceeded through all the ages Vital religion would live and flourish even though the City and Temple of their ancient faith should pass away forever.

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3 *The Divine Mercy set over against Israel's Sins*

This is another line of thought in Stephen's defence, interwoven with the other two,—a three-fold cord of solemn testimony that could not be broken It was so in the patriarchal story, which, with unsparing faithfulness, sets out the transgressions of their fathers alongside of Jehovah's infinite compassions It was manifest in the years of the bondage, when the knowledge of the true God had well-nigh perished from among men, though God continued to watch over them, was mindful of their sorrows, and in the extremity of their affliction was even then raising up a deliverer for them And, more than all, under that deliverer, and even beneath the flaming mount, as well as on the desert road, their murmurings and rebellions had well-nigh surpassed the story of Divine forbearance, and Jehovah's unfailing care and constant loving kindness.

And this, which had characterized all their history, was being repeated, with intensified aggravations, by the generation whose leaders Stephen was now addressing And these leaders had led the people in unbelief and disobedience, and had stimulated them to a crowning act of impiety in betraying and murdering the Righteous One, whom the persecuted prophets,—persecuted by their fathers,—had so plainly foretold!

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4 *The martyrdom of the faithful witness*

As Stephen traces this damning record, and marks the increasing hostility of his unwilling auditors, his holy zeal blazes into a withering indignation,—a terrifying and awful invective,—

that cuts his enemies to the heart; and "they gnashed on him with their teeth" They could not endure the true but scathing indictment · they stopped their ears to his closing and ecstatic testimony to his vision of the Nazarene standing at the right hand of God, and with loud cries of rage they rushed upon him with one accord and hurried him to execution "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,'—'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge'"

Verses 3 and 15 Contrast Abraham being sent out of Chaldea with Jacob being sent out of Canaan God only seems to reverse Himself The quiet, personal character of the earlier movement the mighty forces of nature used to forward the later movement The snows and rains on Africa's central mountains shed abundantly for years, and then for years withheld, are used to produce conditions in Egypt that will exalt Joseph, and bring Jacob down into Goshen —Vs 17 Mark Israel in Egypt, and Egypt's changing dynasties —Vss 20–21 Providence in the early years of Moses Reared by Thermuthis, but nursed by Jochebed God usually gives great mothers to *great men Juliana of Stolberg and Martha Washington were not accidents.* —Vss 23–29 Going before Providence necessitates waiting for Providence. *Moses was forty years ahead of time, and had to wait in the desert for forty* years —Vs 32 What is God to me through what He was to my fathers?—a question we all need to ask ourselves —Vs 32 Our believing dead are alive God is the God, not of the dead, but of the living —Vs 34. It was Moses' own doing that drove him out of Egypt, it is God's plan that carries him back —Vs 35 The rejected of men is often the chosen of God —Vss 36–37 Moses was deliverer, leader, law-giver, and prophet —Vs 37 Moses and Messiah,—see page 50—Vs 42 God's turning and man's refusal to turn —Vs 42 God made their sin their punishment They would serve the host of heaven, and He gave them up to that service So God often does to men,—"If any man defileth the temple of God, him will God defile"—Vss. 44–53 A long course of persistent sin, in the face of superabounding mercies and privileges, must end in remediless ruin —Vs 54 Searing the conscience and hardening the heart open the way to the most terrible crimes

Vss 6 8–15 AND 7 1–60 STEPHEN

I The Accusation
 1 The authors
 2 The subject
 3 The weakness
II. The Defence
 1 Source
 2 The point of his argument
 3 The application
III. The Martyrdom —(*The Homilist*)

Vss 2-5 Conversion

I. The Divine Part
   1 The vision
   2 The command

II The Human Part
   1. The obedience
   2 The pilgrimage
   3 The tribulation
   4 The inheritance.

(*Bonar, Rev Dr. Horatius*)

Vs 5 God's Strange Way with Abraham

I The contradiction in the letter of the text
II The non-disappointment of the patriarch
III The solidarity of the believer with his child
IV The alluring illusiveness of the believing life,—The fulfillment of the promise seems to escape us, only to bring us to better things further on,—Heb 11 8 and 10

Vs 30 The Burning Bush

I A type of Israel in bondage
II A type of Christ in His Church —
   1. Preserving,—2 Purifying,—3 Glorifying

Vs 33 Reverence for a Holy Place.

I What constitutes a "holy place"?
II What is true reverence for such places?

Vs 34. God and His People's Sorrows

I He knows all about them
II He determines their nature, and sets the bounds of their power
III He truly sympathizes with those who suffer, and does not afflict willingly
IV. In due time He brings deliverance

Vs 51 Resisting the Spirit

I By denying His influence on the heart
II In mistaking the times when He operates
III Through ignorance of the nature of His strivings
IV In claiming we cannot repent
V In waiting for conviction

Vss. 55–56 Stephen's Martyrdom.

Consider

I The power of the Holy Spirit in him, that you may learn to rely upon that power.

II The source of his dying comfort, that you may learn to gaze upon the same ravishing vision

III The effect of this heavenly comfort upon him, in the hope that we may live in peace, and fall asleep in ease, by faith in the same great sight which cheered his dying eyes—(*Spurgeon*)

Vs 55 Stephen's Vision.

I A reality

II Under terrible circumstances

III Meaning assurance of help from Jesus

IV Insuring his triumph over death

Vss 54–59 The Death of Stephen

I The victim conquering

II The witness testifying

III The hero crowned—(*The Homilist*)

Vs. 59 The Soul

I Man's soul survives corporal death

II In death the importance of man's soul is specially felt

III The well-being of the soul consists in its dedication to Jesus.

IV This dedication is the one great thought of the earnest saint (*The Homilist.*)

Vs 59 The Soul.

I The body is the house where the soul dwells

II The soul is a spirit

III The soul is the offspring of God

IV The soul shall never die—(*Fletcher's Lectures*)

Vs 59 Calling on the Name of Jesus

I How Christ and the Father can both bestow, and are both the proper objects of prayer

II Some of the peculiar advantages of praying to Christ
  1 He may be approached with less dread
  2 He may be more easily apprehended
  3 This tends to impress us with the importance of the place He holds in Zion —(*Griffin, Rev Dr E D*)

Vs 60 The Prayer of Stephen.

I The prayer of a dying man
II The prayer of one who entirely loses sight of himself
III The thoughts and feelings of a man who seeks after nothing but the kingdom of God and His righteousness

(*Schleiermacher, Rev F E D*)

Vss 59-60 Faithful Unto Death

I Stephen's life
II Stephen's prayer
III Stephen's death —(*Hastings, Rev Dr James*)

Vs 59 Stephen, the First Christian Martyr

I The man
  1 Full of faith
  2 Full of the Holy Spirit
II His work
III His death
  1 Violent,— 2 Triumphant,— 3 Potent in influence

(*Drew Sermons on Golden Texts, 1909*)

Vs 56 The Heavens Opened

I Stephen gazing into heaven
II Stephen looking at Christ
III Stephen stoned
IV. Stephen in his dying prayer
V Stephen asleep —(*Talmage, Rev Dr T De Witt*)

Vs 59 The Believer's Dying Prayer

I There is a living Lord above
II There is a spiritual existence apart from the body
III We may confidently commit our souls to the Divine keeping

Vs 60 THE CROWNING OF LOVE

I The Christ-like prayer
II The prayer of the perfected saint

NOTE —The author has not thought it needful or wise, in a non-critical Exposition, to discuss the so-called "mistakes of Stephen," i e., the differences between his statements of history in verses 14 and 16, and the Old Testament record, as we have it in Genesis 46 27, 33 19, and 49 30 That there are real discrepancies here must be admitted Many explanations of them have been offered, more or less satisfactory,—chiefly less, but the differences still remain And the devout reader will recognize that fact, while he still rests in the assurance that there is nothing in them either to impair a sane view of inspiration, or discredit the Divine guidance of the protomartyr's speech And we may dismiss the matter with the wise words of one of our ablest and sanest Commentators, viz —"It is easy to cut the knot by assuming a mistake on Stephen's part, but not so easy to account for its being made by such a man, addressing such an audience, and then perpetuated in such a history, without correction or exposure, for a course of ages"—(*J A Alexander*)

DIVISION II.

WITNESSES "IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA"

VIII:1—XII 25.

DIVISION II

WITNESSES "IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA",—VIII:1—XII:25

SECTION 1.—THE TESTIMONY OF THE PERSECUTED,—8:1–4

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the Church which was in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. 3 But Saul laid waste the Church, entering into every house, and, dragging men and women, committed them to prison. 4 They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word.

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1. *The burial of Stephen,—vs. 2.* 2. *The rigorous persecution,—vss. 1–3.* 3. *The spread of the glad tidings,—vs. 4.*

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1. *The burial of Stephen,—vs. 2.*

This care of the bruised and lacerated body of the protomartyr was taken by "devout men." It is thought by some that this term "devout" is used by Luke in almost a technical sense, as descriptive of those whose faces were turned toward the light, but who were not yet fully instructed in the doctrine and fellowship of Christ, so that they could be properly called believers or disciples. Cornelius was a "devout man," and had under him a "devout soldier," whom he made his messenger, with two of his household servants, to Peter in Joppa. There were also dwelling in Jerusalem at Pentecost "devout men out of every nation under heaven." And while the original word in chapters two and ten is not the same, the two words have substantially the same meaning, as descriptive of character (see the exposition of Section 6, page 149), and whether we use the one or the other it cannot be said that, in these instances, the "devout" were already actually believers in Jesus. And, if this distinction in Luke's use of the term holds good throughout his narrative, it would seem as if these men who buried

the martyr were not the open and known disciples of the Nazarene, but strangers in whom the nascent faith was here coming to its first public manifestation. This seems probable, even if the words of the annalist will not invariably bear this interpretation. So bitter was the rage of the persecuting powers, it would have been fatal to any known followers of Jesus for them to have had a hand in the sepulture of the faithful witness And, if it seems distressing to learn that the interment of the martyr should have fallen into the hands of comparative strangers, it is fitting we should remember that the Divine Martyr Himself was entombed, not by the devoted Twelve, but by two hitherto unknown and unrecognized followers.

The great lamentation over the death of Stephen was to be expected; and in this the known and unknown disciples doubtless had a share. The violent removal of such a "burning and shining light" could not but leave a great horror of darkness The mourning must have been widespread and deep; and this must have been intensified, too, by the mourning customs prevalent among Oriental people in primitive times These mourning customs, so common in Stephen's day, and which seem so extravagant to us, and unbecoming to believers, were slowly though surely modified and moderated, as men came to realize the blessed state of their believing dead, and the certainty that even the mortal remains of all such were still in the keeping of their ever-living Redeemer

The mourning of believers over their believing dead has in it elements of sweetness, mingled with bitterness, that are indescribable. Our tears are not forbidden But we "sorrow not as those who have no hope" The days of separation from our beloved, and bereavement of their fellowship, are sure to come; but the "time is short," and our chief concern should be that, whether they or we belong to the departing host, the survivors may have good hope that it is well with the souls of those who have "crossed the bourne whence no traveler returns."

Verse 2 Christianity moderates, but does not forbid, the grief of those who have been bereaved—Vs 2 The right of sepulture is inalienable. The safety of the living and respect for the dead alike demand the prompt concession of this right

2 *The rigorous persecution,—vss. 1–3.*

This persecution was under the leadership of Saul of Tarsus, if, indeed, it was not instigated chiefly by his terrible animosity. As this is the first reference in the Scriptures to a man whose personality and influence soon became such dominating forces in the development of Christianity, it is well for us to take a look at him.

He had the birthright of Roman citizenship, but he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees He was devoted to Judaism with a zeal and ardor that were fanatical. His hatred of the Nazarenes was malignant and unrelenting,—none the less fierce that it grew out of an ignorance that was not less colossal than inexcusable. His every breath was full of "threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" He was "exceedingly mad against them," and "when they were put to death he gave his vote against them."

This was the leader in this first organized persecution of the infant Church The growth of his persecuting spirit is indicated in the narrative;—(1) He was present to care for the outer garments of the infuriated men who stoned Stephen;—(2) With the insensate rage and violence of that bloody execution he was in thorough sympathy Though doubtless impressed by the dying martyr's testimony and beatific vision, he yet stood among his murderers "consenting unto his death",—(3) He zealously led in a house-to-house visitation, in searching for adherents of "The Way," and, "laying waste the Church," and "dragging men and women" from their homes, "committed them to prison"; (4) Nor did this activity in Jerusalem satisfy the raging of his malice "He persecuted them even unto foreign cities," and believers in far-off Damascus were not beyond the grasp of his unrelenting malevolence.

The effect of this fiery persecution was inevitable. The brotherhood of believers was broken up. No more public assemblies were permitted or possible Solomon's Porch was doubtless barred to those whose preaching in the judgment of their enemies was a profanation of the sacred precincts of the Temple And, even in private houses, the informal meetings of the disciples were held in secret, while some of their number were detailed to watch beside barred gates against surprise and arrest, as Rhoda seems to have been thus stationed for such a purpose.

The great body of the private membership of the Church was scattered near and far through the cities and villages of the land The twelve apostles alone remained in Jerusalem How they escaped this outburst of malignant zeal does not clearly appear That it was important for the Church itself that its leaders should for the present remain together for mutual counsel and encouragement it is not difficult to understand All the more important, we should say, was it for their enemies to get hold of them and destroy them But they were kept in safety even in the stronghold of their foes That Divine Power which protected Joash in the very precincts of the Temple for six years, while the infamous Athaliah ruled and raged in defiance of God and man in the little capital, preserved the apostles also even in the narrow boundaries of the walls of old Jerusalem The fear of them may have fallen on their enemies Men so manifestly endowed with supernatural powers were not to be trifled with And so the rulers let them alone, while no doubt the apostles themselves did all they could in reason do to avoid an open breach

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Verse 1 Free consent to an evil deed is not less guilty than full participation in its accomplishment Saul only held the garments of those who threw the stones but he was as much a murderer as any of them —Vs 1 God will always keep His own He may do so by sending them away from danger, or by guarding them in the immediate presence of danger —Vs 3 Great malice, combined with great ignorance, may lead to great sin, and yet eventually meet with a greater forgiveness But great malice and great knowledge are important and needful elements of that "sin which is unto death," and hath never forgiveness, "neither in this world, nor in that which is to come"

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3. *The spread of the glad tidings,—vs 4*

"They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word" The disciples were scattered, not silenced Several things connected with this scattering are worthy of special note, viz.—

(1) It was ordered of the Lord The devil here, as often, was working to the furtherance of God's purposes He was minded to

destroy the infant Church by scattering its membership. His scheme really greatly multiplied its numbers and power You can extinguish a fire by scattering the brands here and there, but, if those brands fall in the right place, the light and heat of the conflagration will be vastly extended It was so here Satan broke up the central fire, but God took care of the brands He guided their fall, and made them centers of other holy fires throughout Judea and Samaria.

(2) This spread of the glad tidings was accomplished through the private membership of the Church It is not enough for a Church that it have evangelistic pastors Every individual member must be a messenger of good tidings There was room in Jerusalem before the storm of persecution broke for many to say, "There is much work to be done here, unbelievers are just at hand. with so much 'land to be possessed,' why look further, why go abroad?" But God routed them out, and sent them forth. He barred the nearer doors, and swung wide the further gates, that so the Gospel might more widely prevail

(3) "The word" they preached carried the "tidings of great joy, which were to be to all people" These private members were true to the single message of their leaders They spoke the same "one word" They proclaimed Jesus the Nazarene as the risen and exalted Son of God Their message was one of joy Luke's expression is singularly full and expressive,—"They went about preaching the glad tidings of the word," literally "evangelizing the word" They had heard the message of the prophet, and sought to fulfill it,—"O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up on a high mountain, O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid, say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God" They were banished from the capital, but they went forth, not seeking hiding-places from their persecutors, but to find new and responsive audiences for the words of grace and life, which they were commissioned to proclaim "Persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed," they went everywhere full of joy to "tell the wondrous story"

Verse 4 How blessed are they who have a message of salvation for lost men

Vss 8 4-5 AND 35 ALL AT IT.

I. The universality of the work of evangelism
II The naturalness of it.
III. The joyfulness of the work
IV. The supremacy of the work
V The speciality of the work —(*Spurgeon*)

Vss 1 AND 3, 9 5 AND 11 THE STRONG CONTRASTS OF MORAL CHARACTER

I Moral character quiescently consenting to the wrong
II Also in determined hostility to the right
III Also aroused and inquiring
IV Also in communion with God —(*The Homilist*)

Vs 4 VACATION

I Its benefits
II. Its dangers
1 Inattention to secret duties
2 Caught in the undertow of wordliness
3 Yielding to selfishness
4. Neglect of Church and public Christian duties
(*The Treasury*)

SECTION 2 —THE TESTIMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS IN SAMARIA,—8 5-25

SUB-SECTION 1 —*The Unofficial Visit of Philip,—8 5-13*

5 And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ 6 And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard and saw the signs which he did 7 For from many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed 8 And there was much joy in that city

9 But there was a certain man, Simon, by name, who before-time in the city used sorcery, and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one 10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great 11 And they gave heed to him, because that of long time he had amazed them with his sorceries 12 But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women 13 And Simon also himself believed and, being baptized, he continued with Philip, and, beholding signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed

1. *The success of Philip's mission,—vss 5-8.* 2 *The spurious conversion of Simon,—vss. 9-13*

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1 *The success of Philip's mission,—vss. 5-8.*

This Philip is the Deacon, elsewhere mentioned only in chapters 6 5 and 21 8 He is often confounded with Philip the Apostle His work of ministering, with his fellow-deacons, to the needs of the Hellenistic widows was broken up by the scattering of the persecution But, like Stephen, Philip was gifted as a preacher of the glad tidings He was an evangelist as well as deacon. In the only other subsequent reference to him in this history he is called "Philip the evangelist," and is mentioned as living in Cæsarea with four daughters, who also were heralds of the "good news."

Philip seems to have shared the wider vision and far outlook of Stephen And so, when compelled to fly from Jerusalem, he goes down to Samaria. Grace enabled him to overcome the racial animosity of the Jews toward the Samaritans; and first of all the brotherhood of believers, he hastened to carry the Gospel to the traditional enemies of his people.

The message of the evangelist is briefly but suggestively set forth by the historian,—"He proclaimed unto them the Christ,"—literally, "He heralded to them Messiah" The proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth as the Lord's Anointed,—their promised Messiah-Saviour,—this was Philip's message A fuller statement of that message is given in the 12th verse. Philip came to Samaria "preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" As Paul, afterwards in Rome for two years, continued "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ," so here Philip delivers the same message. He has learned, and now explains, the true nature of the Messianic kingdom, and dwells with persuasive power upon the name "that is above every name," the name of Jesus Christ, the Anointed Saviour

The neighboring city, only a few years before, had received the Nazarene for a blessed sojourn of two days, and had come to recognize in Him the "Saviour of the world" Little wonder then that the people of Samaria "gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip" Is the suggestion far-

fetched that the cry of the woman of the nearby Sychar,—awakened to attention, thoughtfulness, the voice of conscience, and the pleadings of faith,—"Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did! Is not this the Christ?"—should have sounded through the beautiful vale of Shechem till it came even to the capital, the white crown sitting on her emerald hill, and so prepared many of the Samaritans for the glad tidings which the evangelist was commissioned to proclaim?

The Samaritans heard the word which Philip spoke, and saw the signs which he wrought The publicans and sinners, we are told, drew near to the Lord, in the days of his earthly ministry, "to hear Him" (Luke 15 1), the cavillers of Capernaum conditioned their faith on their witnessing the signs (John 6 30), the people of Samaria both heard the word and saw the signs; and so they came to believe

Were not the signs which they witnessed well fitted to awaken their sympathetic interest and lead them to faith in the great Physician? Here was healing for the souls of men,—deliverance from the possession and power of evil spirits Here also was a sovereign cure for all physical maladies, for "many that were palsied, and were lame, were healed" The result of Philip's mission was, as is always the case with the faithful preaching, and hearty and sincere acceptance, of the Gospel,—the city was full of joy As at Pentecost, "gladness and singleness of heart" ruled the great company of believers, so here the multitudes of a city were filled with gladness

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Verse 5 The Gospel of Christ is the only efficient remedy for family feuds and racial animosities—Vs 6 The "word" and the "sign" were the victorious weapons of the evangelist's warfare—Vs 7 The devil is a great blusterer, he makes the most noise when he is nearest defeat—Vs 7 The authenticating signs which Jesus enabled his disciples to exhibit were like His own wonder-works i e, works of mercy and healing—Vs 8 The triumph of the Gospel in any city will fill that city with great joy and gladness

Vss 5-8 PHILIP PREACHES CHRIST IN SAMARIA

I The subject of his discourses
II The effect of his ministrations

Simeon (Horæ Homileticæ)

2 *The spurious conversion of Simon,—vss 9-13.*

This deceiver is known in Church History as Simon Magus, i. e, Simon the Magian There seems to be no doubt that he was one of the greatest of all sorcerers named in the annals of men. The early Christians have many accounts, apparently of the highest authenticity, of his remarkable career. It is enough for us to attend here to what is said of him in the inspired narrative

His estimate of himself is suggestive, and throws a flood of light upon his character He gave out that "himself was some great one" Amazing men with his magical arts, with monumental assurance he set himself up for some extraordinary being,—yet robing himself in mystery, that men might wonder and conjecture who he could be And the people, from the least to the greatest, as not infrequently the unthinking populace will do, took him at his own estimate, and even enlarged upon it, as they cried, "This man is that power of God which is called Great"

The historian tells us how he came to be so influential in Samaria He amazed them with his sorceries,—bewitching them with his magical arts, and mystifying them with the exhibition of occult powers The age was one greatly given to the so-called "Black Arts" Simon Magus in Samaria, and Bar-Jesus of Paphos in Cyprus, and the unnamed magicians of Ephesus, whose books were burnt, to the value of fifty thousand pieces of silver, all evidence the wide prevalence of this diabolical practice, and the certainty that men, who reject a divine revelation, yet so crave the knowledge of the unseen world as to resort to even divination and witchcraft to satisfy their longings

Simon professed conversion and received baptism Going with the crowd, and astonished by Philip's miracles, he "also himself believed, and being baptized he continued with Philip, and, beholding signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed" He ceased his wicked sorceries, and kept the company of the evangelist. That he was not truly converted from the error of his ways will soon appear, but for the time being he seems to be himself a miracle of grace Yet all the time his attention is evidently concentrated on the wonder-works wrought by Philip In the realm of wonder he had hitherto stood alone, a marvel to the multitude Now he

beholds another entering the realm gifted with powers which he knew he had never possessed. And he narrowly observes the stranger, and is confounded by what he sees.

Verse 9 Here is a contest between the true and the false in the realm of the supernatural It would seem as if Philip was enabled to work an unusual number of signs and wonders The Gospel was entering the lists with a pretended supernaturalism, and therefore was specially armed and endowed for the contest —Vs 10 Simon's wonders and witcheries were more than mere sleights of hand and feats of jugglery He seemed to be in reality in league with the Prince of Darkness He was "the power of God," so the people said, "which is called Great"—Vss 11-12 The region of the occult, the unseen world, foretelling the future, divination, magic arts, and kindred subjects, have a strange, weird fascination for multitudes of people To the Christian believer it is both a useless and forbidden realm The Gospel of Christ tells us all we need to know of the unseen world Jesus alone has visited that world, and come back to us with authentic tidings He has given us all the information that is good for us to have, till we go in to look upon His face

SUB-SECTION 2 —*The official visit of Peter and John,—8 14-25*

14 Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John 15 who when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit 16 for as yet He was fallen upon none of them only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus 17 Then laid they their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit 18 Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit 20 But Peter said unto him, Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter for thy heart is not right before God 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee 23 For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity 24 And Simon answered and said, Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me 25 They therefore, when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans

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1. *This visit was by direction of the Church's leaders,—vs. 14* 2. *The object of the apostles' coming down to Samaria,—vss 15-17* 3 *Their dealings with Simon, the sorcerer,—vss 18-24* 4 *Their return journey,—vs 25*

1. *This visit was by direction of the Church's leaders,—vs. 14.*

The mission of Philip was of his own motion. The opportunity for further service in Jerusalem being for the present denied him, his heart full of love and zeal led him to fly, with the good news, down to Samaria It is not improbable also that he thought of this city as the safest place for evangelistic effort, while the storm of persecution raged in Jerusalem The enemies of the Nazarene would not be likely to seek His followers among their own bitter foes, for we may well believe that it was still true that "the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans."

But, unlike Philip's mission, this of Peter and John was by authority of their brethren of the apostolic company. We have no warrant for saying that this deputation was sent to Samaria in any unfriendly spirit, or for the jealous inspection of a work not originated by the leaders themselves. The Church was entering upon the second great period of expansion, through the testimony of the witnesses, as outlined by her Divine Head (1 8), when His disciples were to be witnesses not only "in Jerusalem" but also "in all Judea and Samaria"

It was fitting, therefore, that the apostles should not only mark the progress of the Church in this transitional period, but do also all they could to guide her development in the right direction and to the highest measure of success And who of their number were better qualified to put their hands to the helm than Peter and John? So, these old comrades, who had executed so notable a commission at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, appear at the gates of Samaria, not now, no more than then, with silver and gold for the needy, but with the words of grace and life.

Verse 14. In the choice of able men for important missions the early Church is our wise exemplar.

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2. *The object of the apostles' coming down to Samaria,—vss. 15–17.*

Their mission in this old capital of the Kingdom of Israel was not to criticize the work of the evangelist, but to confirm the souls of believers and to impart to them rich spiritual gifts in the baptism

of the Holy Spirit Manifestly these new disciples had already received the Holy Spirit in converting and saving power under the preaching of Philip, and they had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus It seems evident, therefore, that the use and significance of the full formula of Christian baptism in the Triune Name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit had as yet neither become general, nor generally understood

What, then, did the Samaritans receive, through the laying on of the hands of the apostles, which they had not already received through the preaching of Philip? The answer is, They received what fell on the disciples at Pentecost,—what was given to Cornelius and his household under the preaching of Peter,—and what came to the Ephesian Twelve through the laying on of Paul's hands, i e, the miraculous endowment of power in the gift of the Spirit,—a confirmation of His inner presence and grace, and most of all a sign of power to the unbelieving and disobedient They therefore also "spake with tongues and magnified God" And men in Samaria, as everywhere else, marveled, and said one to another, "We have seen strange things to-day"

Verse 15 Sometimes the best we can do for a fellow-believer is to pray for him, and, if he be a worker in building the kingdom, the best prayer we can offer for him is that he may be filled with the Holy Spirit —Vs 17 The Church needs a new realization of what it is to be baptized with the Holy Spirit for service

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3 *Their dealings with Simon, the sorcerer,—vss 18–24*

Among those who were astonished by what they saw was Simon Magus He had been wont to mystify men, now he is himself mystified Here was a secret these men possessed, which he did not possess, and could not understand That secret—this seems to be his thought—I must have, that through my hands this mysterious power, in the gift of the Spirit and of tongues, may be imparted He had doubtless acquired the mysteries of his occult arts at the cost of a large sum of money If he could purchase this power, it would be of more value than all the balance of his mysterious possessions

The possibility that Simon could cherish such a thought, and make such a proposition to the apostles, discloses the rottenness of the magician's professed conversion, and the hollow formalism of his baptism The sternness of Peter's denunciation is none too severe for the perfidy and hypocrisy of the sorcerer. "Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter for thy heart is not right before God Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity!" Buying the gift of God with money! What sacrilege! No wonder simony has come to be branded as "the heaviest of all ecclesiastical crimes"

The effect on Simon of Peter's indignant and withering denunciation was for the time being terrifying In the extremity of his fear he cried, "Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things ye have spoken come upon me" It was the cry of abject fear, but not the voice of true penitence The sacred narrative veils the future of the noted magician, once brought so near the gates of salvation, and so powerfully wrought upon by the truth of God It is said that he went to Rome with Felix in the year A D 60, and Christian writers tell of his continued career of colossal imposture both in the provinces and in Rome itself, ending at last in self-deception so great that by his own direction he was buried alive in the confident assurance and assertion that he would rise again on the third day, and so he perished the victim of his own cherished delusions.

The apostles made short work with the hypocrite, and, leaving him to his career of villainy, they turned to the accomplishment of their mission That mission was the double one of testimony and evangelization They "testified, and spoke the word of the Lord" They could not forget their function as witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth And the "word of the Lord," which they proclaimed, was a word of salvation through the crucified, risen and exalted Redeemer

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Verse 18 Simony has come to mean the buying and selling of places and preferments in the Church The essence of the sin is in using religion to advance one's temporal interests and such sin is not uncommon in the

modern Church —Vs 19 The possibility and extent of self-deception. It is both a cause and a result of hypocrisy —Vs 21 Getting right with God is chiefly getting the heart right.—Vs 22 Sin is something more than wicked words or deeds, the thoughts of our hearts need to be forgiven —Vs 23 The awful state of the impenitent hypocrite,—"He is in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity"—Vs 24 A false repentance sometimes carries more than one mark of the true In Simon's case, there were (1) Concern of soul,—(2) Conscious need of help,—(3) Asking for prayer. One may experience all these, and still be only a spurious penitent No sorrow for sin will avail, if there be no turning away from sin

Vss 5-24 A Spurious Conversion.

I Having gifts, but not grace
II Worshipping the money-god
III Living for selfish ends
IV Being wrong in heart
V Being wrong in thought
VI Continuing impenitent

Vss 18-24 The Two Simons.

I Simon Magus II. Simon Peter.

Vss 18-24. Simon Magus, or Wrong-heartedness.

I Covetousness is the essence of wrong-heartedness
II Wrong-heartedness is an evil of the greatest magnitude
III There is a determinate way in which this enormous evil may be cured
IV. Although this way is distinctly defined, there is a tendency of the corrupt heart to project methods of its own —(*The Homilist*)

Vss 14-25 The Natural Heart

I The natural heart has no knowledge of divine things
II Man's wickedness before God is in the condition of his heart
III. Only God's power can renew the heart
IV. The hope of man is in prayer —(*Crosby, Rev Dr Howard*)

Section 3 —The Testimony of Philip before the Eunuch,—8 26-40

26 But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and behold a man of Ethiopia,

a eunuch of great authority under Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Jerusalem to worship; 28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah 29 And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot 30 And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31 And he said, How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him 32 Now the passage of the Scripture which he was reading was this,—

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,
So he openeth not his mouth,
33 In his humiliation his judgment is taken away;
His generation who shall declare?
For his life is taken from the earth

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other? 35 And Philip opened his mouth, and, beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus 36 And, as they went on their way, they came to a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus. and, passing through, he preached the Gospel to all the cities till he came to Cæsarea

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1 *The strange commission,—vs 26* 2 *The unexpected meeting,—vss 27-29.* 3 *The Gospel in Isaiah,—vss 30-35.* 4 *Confessing the Lord Jesus,—vss. 36-38* 5 *The parting of the ways,—vss. 39-40.*

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1. *The strange commission,—vs. 26.*

Philip was doing a great work in Samaria. Simon Magus had been silenced though not converted Because of the departure of Peter and John it would seem as if Philip ought to have been allowed to remain. But he is sent away,—sent to the desert, an uninhabited country,—a long journey over the hills of Samaria, or to, and then by, the plain of Sharon down the caravan route to

Gaza Somewhere to the far southwest his road would intersect the one running down from Jerusalem, through Eleutheropolis, the ancient Betogabra. Could not the eunuch have been reached sooner, and with less trouble, directly from Jerusalem? Here, as often, there seems to be no economy in the Lord's administration of His work. He is opulent in resources, and sometimes seems not to study petty savings in spreading the truth

There were doubtless good reasons for sending this messenger, and for sending him from this place Some of these reasons probably found their cogency in Philip himself A change in the field of labor is sometimes good for the laborer Moses needed to go from the populous capitals of the Nile valley to the desert of Midian,—and to the "back side of the desert" at that! The Lord would teach Philip some needed lessons perhaps by sending him away from the attentive and thronging multitudes of populous Samaria to the solitudes of the desert road

And other reasons for this scheme find their explanation in the Ethiopian Treasurer Of course, the Lord might have reached this man in the neighborhood of Jerusalem Indeed the glad tidings might have come to him in saving power within the city gates But he had not been reached hitherto He had been apparently through the great meetings of Pentecost, but had not been converted And now he is on his way to his heathen home The probabilities of his salvation are rapidly diminishing If he is ever saved it must be soon He has left the place of special sacred influences, but the Holy Spirit is not done with him yet He has not come to faith indeed, but his heart is not hardened On the contrary, he is thoughtful and inquiring Time is requisite with him as with many, during which he may come to realize his need, and be led to cry out of the depths for some helper and teacher So, when the preparatory work is done in the hearts of both evangelist and seeker, the providence of God brings them together

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Verse 26 The believer has often, like Abraham, to go out, "not knowing whither"—How often our little plans are swallowed up in the larger plans of our Heavenly Father —The workers remove or die, but the work goes on the ever-present and ever-living Lord stands by while instrumentalities are changed or set aside

Vs 26 A N T Example of Conversion.

I What the angel of the Lord did
II What the Holy Spirit did
III What the preacher of Jesus did
IV What the officer did
V What God did —(*The Gospel Preacher*)

Vss 26-40 The Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch.

I The method of the Holy Spirit with the evangelist Philip
II The Spirit's method with the Ethiopian eunuch
III The harmony of these two methods of influence in their final adjustment —(*Booth, Rev Dr R R*)

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2 *The unexpected meeting,—vss 27-29*

It was unexpected only to Philip and the eunuch To the evangelist the command must have been an inexplicable mystery But he was a soldier, he had learned obedience "And he arose and went"

> "Theirs not to make reply,
> Theirs not to reason why"

If, as seems not unlikely, his route was by the great caravan road from Egypt to Damascus, it may have occurred to him that his mission was to some city or village on the way, or to some caravan journeying over a desolate part of the route But he was "marching under sealed orders" He knew not whither he was bound. And the eunuch himself also had no conception of what was to befall him on that memorable day

As the veil is lifted in Luke's skillful narrative, we can see what was hidden to these two men, how Divine Providence was shaping their movements, on those converging roads, to a meeting, memorable and fruitful evermore in their lives and in the history of the Church of God They are nearing the junction. The northeastern route, branching off from the main line near Gaza, winds through the ever shallower valleys, and, rising over intervening

heights, leads up to Jerusalem Thence it runs north over the hills of Samaria and the plain of Esdraelon, to rejoin the main caravan route at the base of Lebanon, as it stretches away to Damascus, and "the land of the children of the morning"

Along the one road we see the lone evangelist, with pilgrim staff and girded loins, trudging southward, while across the narrowing strip of uninhabited country the other road comes into view; and on it Candace's Treasurer rides his chariot, attended doubtless by the retinue of a distinguished traveler The cavalcade must soon have caught the eye of Philip And he saw the dark-skinned nobleman, not looking impatiently forward from his bleak environment to the refreshing olive-yards and palm-groves of Gaza, gate of Egypt by the sea, but reading the scroll of a book, and longing to comprehend the words of grace and life Then came the Spirit's voice to Philip; and the mystery of his mission to the far-lying desert road was unveiled.

Verse 27 Fields of labor, unimportant in the judgment of men, may have potentialities of inestimable value—Vs 27 "Seekers after God" in these Pentecostal times were not confined to the sixteen nations mentioned in 2 9-11 Even Ethiopia was stretching out her hands unto God—Vs 28 The Bible is an excellent book with which to beguile the tedium of travel, especially in a foreign land—Vs 28 Not every one unsaved in a time of religious interest is hardened Sometimes one who has not come to the light is left thoughtful and inquiring—Vs 28 One who is only awakened in the public assembly is often best brought to Christ in a personal interview—Vs 28 The diligent reader of God's word is certain somewhere and sometime to come across a message just fitted to his heart and circumstances—Vs 29. Conciliatory approaches to the inquiring are likely to be most freely responded to

Vss 27-37 THE CONVERSION OF THE EUNUCH

I. A courtier who reads the Bible
II. A courtier who acknowledges his ignorance
III A courtier who asks instruction from his inferior
IV A courtier who is converted—(*The Homilist*)

Vs. 29 WAYSIDE OPPORTUNITIES

I Opportunity is a time favorable for the accomplishment of any purpose
II An opportunity lost is lost forever
III. God gives opportunities to us all

IV Opportunity for Christian service God makes known to us by the voice of His Spirit

V. If any one would embrace opportunities he must keep himself in thorough preparation —(*The Treasury*)

Vs 29 THE FIRST CONVERT IN AFRICA

I No exertion should be considered too difficult, no prospect too discouraging, if doing good is our purpose

II The Holy Spirit chooses the best people sometimes in the unlikeliest places

III Religious convictions are in value simply inestimable, and ought to be cherished as we would cherish our life itself

LESSONS,—

1 It is wrong to be fastidious about opportunities
2 The measurelessness of a single chance of telling a fellow-being about Jesus Christ
3 Courtesy is never lost on anybody in this weary and somewhat rough world
4 Whosoever desires to do good must find out where the Spirit of God is leading him, or leading others, and then must simply and humbly follow on —(*Robinson, Rev Dr Charles S*)

Vss 26-39 PERSONAL EVANGELISM

I The chosen instrument
II The hopeful sphere of exertion
III The leading of the Spirit
IV The fitting truth

Vss 26-40 THE CONVERSION OF THE EUNUCH

I Not converted in the revival, but very thoughtful
II The humble instrumentality of his conversion
III A great man with a child-like spirit
IV The happiness of a true believer

Vss 26-39 PROVIDENCE AND CONVERSION.

I The journey
II The converging ways
III The interview
IV The parting

3. *The Gospel in Isaiah,—vss 30–35*

The unconscious dignity of the Lord's messenger and the lowly and teachable spirit of the seeker after the truth are manifest, as together they turn to the wonderful words of the evangelical prophet, and find in them the Gospel message and "glad tidings of great joy." The trappings of the royal officer and the way-worn garb of the pilgrim deacon are alike forgotten in the transcendent importance of the words, which, with Spirit-filled and persuasive power, the one expounds to the other

What was the message which Philip found for the inquiring Ethiopian in this passage from Isaiah? It certainly embraced these important points, viz —(1) The prophet was not speaking of himself, but of Jesus of Nazareth He began "from this Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (2) The death of the Christ was no ordinary departure from this world He died as a vicarious sacrifice for sin,—"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," "He was wounded for our transgressions, and was bruised for our iniquities," "He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgressions of my people, to whom the stroke was due" (3) He was thereunto appointed in the eternal counsels "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him," "Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" His death, though accomplished by the hands of wicked men, came about because "He was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (4) The death of the Christ, the apparent culmination of disaster and defeat, was, in fact, the beginning and seal of everlasting triumph "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" "He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand"

Upon this inspired exposition of an inspired prophecy some further remarks are needful and pertinent to this age and generation The eunuch would know the meaning of the prophet, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself, or of some other?" If the answer of Philip were the opinion of a mere man, it would nevertheless merit respectful attention and examination But it is more than the opinion of a man Manifestly the evangelist was guided by the Holy Spirit as to what he should say to this inquir-

ing soul He was sent on this long journey just in order to say what he did He had been preaching in Samaria the "good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." These expressions are used more than once of the preaching of Paul, and are explained, as we shall see, in the record of his ministry in Thessalonica (17 2-3), where he taught "opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I preach unto you, is the Christ" Philip had been greatly blessed in preaching these truths in Samaria, and now to another auditor providentially prepared to receive the word, and with a text divinely laid to his hand, he brings the same saving truth to the Ethiopian Treasurer. And so we have here a Gibraltar of the central truth of the Gospel It is impossible for one to read the words of Isaiah without getting the impression that they record, and were intended to record, the vicarious sufferings of a person,—of one who died for the sins of His people And in the record of Philip's preaching to the eunuch we have the divine assurance that this person here prophetically described is none other than Jesus of Nazareth The passage gives us, then, the testimony of the Divine Spirit to the meaning of His own Scripture And this exposition of the evangelist is a model for us in the interpretation of all Messianic prophecy

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Verse 30 Reading the Scriptures requires (1) Earnestness, (2) Humility, and (3) Sometimes the teaching of another,—but the private use of the Bible is not therefore to be refused—Vss 31-35 The providence of God in leading the eunuch to this particular Scripture, and to Philip's inspired exposition of it, indicates most clearly what truths are best fitted to the needs of inquiring souls They are the truths that revolve around the cross of Christ The reality of sin,—the death of Christ,—the substitutionary and atoning sacrifice,—and the cleansing of the blood,—these are the truths the Divine Spirit led Philip to bring before the Ethiopian treasurer They fit the needs of every inquiring spirit

Vs 34 The Eunuch's Question

I The Word of God in travel
II Divine Providence and human instrumentality in conversion
III The sincere inquirer after the truth will find it
IV This passage is the key to the meaning of prophecy
V The joy of receiving Christ

4. *Confessing the Lord Jesus,—vss 36–38.*

The Treasurer's confession of Christ was immediate and spontaneous. The outward sign of it was his submission to baptism. The evangelist's full and explicit answer to his first question, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this?" leads to the prompt propounding of another, "See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" And Philip as promptly accedes to his request. Those numerous valleys, ever widening down from the Judean hills, and debouching upon the maritime plain, carry streams of water which, in the rainy season, become raging torrents, but in the dry are purling streamlets and shallow pools slowly shriveling up under the summer sun. The crossing of some such water was the eunuch's opportunity; and "commanding the chariot to stand still, they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him," doubtless in the presence of the retinue of the traveler

It is a shallow exegesis that finds in this passage the mode of baptism determined to be by immersion For, besides the ambiguity of the expression, they "both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch," these students of the Holy Oracles could hardly have failed to notice the teaching of the passage which they had just been looking into, that He whose "visage was so marred more than any man," was in the day of his exaltation to "sprinkle many nations"; and with this Scripture fresh in the minds of both teacher and taught, it would seem as if the administration of the Sacrament would be most likely to conform to the words of the prophecy That the mode of baptism is not indubitably settled by this incident is no doubt true, but the probabilities of the case are certainly not with the immersionist.

Verses 36–38 Real acceptance of Christ and an open confession of Him before men are inseparably connected he who is unwilling to confess is not yet a true disciple

Vs 35 PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH.

I The passage expounded
II The exposition given
III The effect produced—*Simeon* (*Horæ Homileticæ*).

5 *The parting of the ways,—vss. 39–40.*

Once more the Lord carries on His work after a strange manner. We should have done differently A distinguished and influential officer of a foreign court is converted. Who can tell what an open way is now provided for the triumph of the Gospel in that foreign land? But how needful that this new convert be instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly! Surely Philip should stay by the work and help this young Christian! So we reason So we should have planned But the Holy Spirit Himself is staying by His work, and He has another and urgent mission for Philip The new convert, with the conscious presence of his new-found Divine Saviour, goes "on his way rejoicing." "But Philip was found at Azotus" It is vain to speculate how he got there, or why he was transferred There is no room to doubt that there was something miraculous in the transaction Philip had led a strenuous life from the time he had been sent away from Samaria, and it may have been in merciful concession to the weariness of his body that he was spared the long walk of twenty-five miles up to Azotus, or Ashdod.

Verse 39 Dependence upon men is a besetting temptation of young Christians It is good, and often necessary, to have everything else taken from us, and to be shut up to God To be thus shut up to God is to be vitally connected with the unfailing fountain of spiritual joy—Vs 40 Personal interviews with inquiring souls is an admirable preparation for preaching the glad tidings to the multitudes we may encounter in our onward way

Vs 39 THE CHARACTER OF THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

I The character of this favorite of heaven
II The nature of his joy
III The way in which he acquired such enviable satisfaction

(*Bishop Dehon*)

Vs 39 THE BELIEVER'S JOY IN CHRIST JESUS

I In the revelation to him of Christ Jesus, and salvation through His blood.
II In his admission to the family of Christ by baptism, and all the privileges connected with this high dignity.

III *In the new, clearer, and more satisfying views of the Supreme Being, His nature, will, and worship*

IV *In the prospect of being made greatly and extensively useful to others*

(Hunter, Rev Dr. Henry.)

SECTION 4—A NEW WITNESS CALLED,—*9 1-30*

The historian now turns from the main line of his chronicle of the growth of the Church, to trace the origin and progress of another influence destined soon to become all-powerful and controlling, just as one, exploring the slowly expanding current of a mighty river, pauses to trace the fountain spring of a tributary stream, which, with rapidly increasing volume, soon joins and dominates the rolling flood, as it sweeps onward to the sea The narrative suggests two preliminary questions, which we may well consider just here, viz —

1 Why another witness?

2 And why this witness?

These two questions in large measure coalesce into one, and this one calls for both a negative and a positive answer

Another witness was called,

1 Not because the disciples had made a mistake in the selection of Matthias to take Judas's place This explanation loses sight of the fact that the choice of the substitute apostle was no more the doing of the fallible brotherhood of believers than of their sovereign and omniscient Lord It was only after they had done all that man could do that the disciples appealed to their risen Master to indicate His will, and were answered in the disclosure of the lot And Matthias was as truly numbered, of the Lord, among His apostles as were Peter and John

2 Nor was it because it was an after-thought of God to meet an unforeseen emergency Men are obliged to provide checks and balances for their defective machinery, whether material or immaterial, and to plan new devices for new necessities, for the incoming of which they are not gifted with any foresight But God's plans never need any patching or readjustment "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world,"—a scriptural truth this, though this statement of it is not found in

the American Standard Revision, which here follows the most ancient manuscripts Saul's conversion and commission were provided for in the counsels of eternity.

3 Nor was it because of any inefficiency on the part of the men whom the Lord had already chosen to be His apostles Because the historian says nothing of the work of these men, save of Peter and John, and little of it except in his earlier chapters, while his chronicle details the testimony of Paul and Barnabas, and Silas, and Stephen, and Philip, it is a gratuitous and baseless charge to make that Luke says nothing because there was nothing to say, and that these men had proved incompetent and inefficient, and disappointing to their Lord Paul no doubt "labored more abundantly than they all" , but there is not the shadow of a reason to believe that they had in any respect whatever come short in their work The rapid spread of Christianity among the nations is explicable only on the supposition that all the apostles and friends of Christ were faithful in the fulfilment of their evangelistic commission

We cannot but feel that none of these reasons for calling another witness is adequate or convincing But we shall probably find a sufficient explanation of the Lord's making another choice, and especially of His calling Saul of Tarsus, in one or all of the following considerations, viz —

1 The risen and exalted Saviour would give His ancient covenant people a crowning and indisputable evidence of His Messiahship His parable represents the Eternal Father as saying, in explanation of His last great commission of mercy,—"They will reverence my son" And the Lord here seems to say,—By the call and conversion of this flaming persecutor I will give my people Israel, who have rejected all other evidence, such an overwhelming demonstration of the justice of my Messianic claims as shall be convincing to multitudes, and shall leave all men without excuse Saul was known to his contemporaries as few men of his age They knew his passionate devotion to Judaism They saw many evidences of his bitter and fanatical hatred of the Nazarenes. And later they saw the marvelous transformation in the life and character of the young Pharisee To thoughtful people, who were willing to see with opened eyes, there could be no adequate cause of such a change, save that to which Saul invariably ascribed it, i e., his vision of the risen and glorified Jesus of Nazareth

2 The enlarging work, soon to take place in the Gentile world, needed one specially endowed and fitted to commend the Gospel to all peoples. It was no reflection upon the Twelve, who, as their enemies said, were "unlearned and ignorant men," and had never studied in the rabbinical schools, to say of their intellectual furniture and equipment that they were meager compared with those of Saul, who had been brought up in the most celebrated schools of his day, both at Tarsus and in Jerusalem It would be, indeed, hard to say that, in native genius and mental power, the author of the Fourth Gospel was in any degree inferior to the writer of the Epistle to the Romans But it is safe to say that neither one could have written what the other wrote Each was endowed and fitted for his field of labor And, now that the providence of God was opening a new and world-wide field, there was an urgent call for an evangelistic herald, specially endowed in gifts and preparation for carrying and commending the glad tidings to all outlying nations of men

3 The Lord would teach His disciples that, even as "the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them," so His Holy Faith on earth must win her triumphs, not by destroying her enemies, but by making them her friends The violent removal of the cruel persecutor from the earth by a bolt from the skies would have been an answer to the prayers of many of the suffering saints The Church has found abundant and proper use for the Imprecatory Psalms But the grandest triumphs of the Cross have been won in saving the enemy while exterminating his enmity We best conquer our foes by making them our friends

In these considerations, taken singly or collectively, we find a sufficient explanation of the calling of another witness to the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and His enthronement at the right hand of God, as the anointed Christ, and sovereign Saviour of the world.

To that Call we must now attend

SUB-SECTION 1—"The heavenly vision,"—vss 1-9

1 *But Saul*, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether

men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem 3 And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven 4 and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest· 6 but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do 7 And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but beholding no man 8 And Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus 9 And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink

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1 *The occasion,—vss. 1–2* 2 *The place,—vs 3* 3 *The voice from the sky,—vss 4–6* 4 *Shut in with God,—vss 7–9*

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1 *The occasion,—vss 1–2.*

The fiery spirit of the persecuting Saul was not satisfied with the dispersion of the Nazarenes from Jerusalem He would follow them up in their flight, and seize them wherever they might hide Naturally his eyes turned to Damascus, where was a considerable colony of Jews, some of whom no doubt had been at Pentecost, and had there come to accept Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah-Saviour Against them the zealot's anger burned, and he sought from the high priest authority to do as he desired, to bring them "unto Jerusalem in bonds to be punished"

Saul's method of procedure raises some interesting questions We know from other sources that the high priest, then recently exalted to that dignity, was Theophilus He belonged to the sect of the Sadducees, but Saul was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. Is Luke's statement credible that such a man would apply to such a source for the commission he sought, or that his application would meet with favor? A superficial answer would be, No. But, if we recall the fact that Herod and Pilate, long-time enemies, laid aside their differences through their joint work in sending Jesus to Calvary, we shall not find it difficult to believe that the enmity of these opposing schools vanished from the hearts of their representatives because swallowed up in the fierce floods of a common hatred of the Nazarenes

Another question confronts us,—What authority had the high priest in Damascus, that Saul should seek a commission at his hands? The answer reveals the minute accuracy with which Luke's story fits into the history of those times Caligula, the infamous, had recently become the successor on the throne of the Cæsars of the infamous Tiberius It was quite the custom of the Roman Emperors to confirm their own power by playing off one subordinate ruler against another After this sort of statesmanship, Caligula, though a friend of Herod, yet favored Aretas by conferring upon him the sovereignty of Damascus Aretas and Herod were enemies It was the daughter of Aretas whom Herod had put away because of his illicit connection with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife Aretas therefore was justly incensed against Herod, but he continued to be a warm friend of Theophilus, the high priest

Saul had reason, therefore, to believe that the commission of the high priest would have availing efficacy even in that alien city, and that Aretas the king, through his ethnarch, would confirm the authority which the high priest presumed to exercise So Saul of Tarsus, with a fitting retinue as a commissioner of the Sanhedrin, started to Damascus

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Verse 1 The terrible power of an unenlightened conscience If this "voice of God in the soul" be wrong, everything is wrong Saul claimed (23 1) always to have lived a conscientious life, nevertheless he made havoc of the Church of God and wasted it —Vs 2 The significant description of Nazarenes, disciples, believers, and saints, as the people of "The Way"

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2 *The place,—vs. 3*

One spot on the road by which Saul journeyed is of surpassing interest,—the place where he was converted There were in ancient times two main routes, by which Saul and his companions might have journeyed One was over the hills of Samaria, turning down through Scythopolis, and going on to the Sea of Galilee, where just at the lower end of the Sea it crossed the Jordan, and thence stretched onward to the northeast By the other way the travelers would continue northward across the plain of Esdraelon and the

hills of Upper Galilee, to strike the main caravan route from Egypt to Mesopotamia, crossing the upper Jordan near the waters of Merom, or at Cæsarea-Philippi, and so onward, as the other road, to the northeast

It is impossible to say by which road Saul journeyed. And happily it is of no material moment to determine the question The probability is that as the roads neared the city they converged into one The traditional scene of "the heavenly vision" is at Juneh, where the traveler gets the first view of the plain of Damascus, about six miles southwest of the Garden City The story of the monks is not reliable, but not improbable, and the inspired narrative itself says that "he drew nigh unto Damascus" It will not be difficult, therefore, to reproduce the scene with a fair degree of fidelity to the facts The road here comes to run upon an elevated plateau, from the base of which, as from a gigantic terrace, the beautiful and fertile plain of Damascus rolls away to the southeast This plain is intersected in a number of places by Abana and Pharpar, whose waters were preferred by Naaman the leper to "all the waters of Israel" And these rivers are formed by innumerable "streams from Lebanon," the beauty of which has been celebrated by Solomon in the Song of Songs Along the edge of this high table-land, just at the verge of the terrace, the highway is cut out of the solid limestone rock, which in that region is peculiarly white and glistening The glare of the mid-day sun, shining upon the dazzling limestone road, was of exceeding and painful brightness, while the heat was no doubt very oppressive Off to the right, and just below and in front of the company, lay the city of gardens and fountains As an Oriental traveler describes it, who saw it in the dry season, when all the surrounding country was as brown as a stubble-field, the city lay before the eyes of the persecutor like "an emerald gem in a setting of copper-bronze"

Verses 3–9 The evidential value of Saul's conversion He was a man of pronounced characteristics up to the hour of the "heavenly vision,"—a Pharisee, and a zealous and even fanatical advocate of Judaism, but from that hour he is a man of equally pronounced characteristics of a totally opposite nature,—an earnest, self-sacrificing evangelist of the faith he had sought to destroy What brought about the change? The right answer to this question demonstrates the supreme Divinity and Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth

3 *The voice from the sky,—vss. 4-6.*

We have three accounts of what occurred in this memorable place, viz—(1) Luke's narrative as here given, and probably derived from the apostle Paul himself,—(2) The story as rehearsed by Paul to his countrymen from the castle-stairs,—and (3) His account of the event, as given in his testimony before King Agrippa in the Prætorium of Cæsarea These three accounts, as we might suppose, do not differ one from another in any substantial particular; and they all emphasize deeply interesting details of the "heavenly vision."—e g (1) The sudden flashing forth of the blinding light. The radiance of the mid-day sun was almost intolerable. But here was a glory above that noontide brightness "It seemed as if the whole atmosphere had caught fire, and they were suddenly wrapped in sheets of blinding splendor." (2) The overwhelmed and fallen cavalcade There were members of that company, we may be sure,—and preeminent among them, their leader,—who did not fear the face of mortal man But before this appalling visitation from the unseen world they bowed in abject dread, as the rushes bend before the storm (3) The terrifying, remonstrating, yet gracious voice of the glorified Nazarene,—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" That voice was in the Hebrew tongue The persecutor's companions heard the sound, he alone understood the meaning of the words and with uplifted eye, in shrinking glances, and with trembling heart, the persecutor then for the first time saw the Lord Saul now knew that Jesus of Nazareth, whose Church he had been wasting, was risen from the dead, and was the sovereign Lord of all (4) The instant obedience of a conquered foe. Saul rose from the ground a new man, and owning with unreserved devotion a new Master. The transformation was already complete.

"Betwixt the stirrup and the ground,
No mercy sought, he mercy found"

And his second question,—"What shall I do Lord?" is the inquiry of a regenerated soul.

Verse 4 Jesus identifies Himself with His persecuted followers. Persecuting them Saul was persecuting him!—Vs 5 The overwhelming revela-

tion of the "heavenly vision,"—I the King of Glory am the Nazarene!—Vs 4. Mercy mingled with the judgment of this terrifying revelation As Saul rehearses the story to Agrippa, he remembered this,—"It is hard for thee,—not for Me but for thee—to kick against the goad"—Vs 5 Saul had evidently been dealt with by the Divine Spirit before, and he had resisted His monitions He had long but fruitlessly fought against the Holy Spirit's work,—"kicking against the goad"

Vss 3-6 THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL

I As a record for our instruction
II As a model for our imitation
III As an example for our encouragement

Simeon (Horæ Homiletica).

Vs. 4 KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS

I An ox II An ox-goad III Kicks against it
IV Painful results V Wise counsel—(*Spurgeon*)

Vs. 6 LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?

I An acknowledgment of Divine authority
II A consciousness of personal responsibility
III A definition of practical religion—(*The Homilist*)

Vs 6 LIFE-WORK

I There is something for ME to do
II God makes out our specific duty
III Duty is to be ascertained by special prayer
IV A willingness to do what God directs is implied in this prayer

(*Hutchinson, Rev E*)

Vs 4 WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME?

I The preparation II The vision III The voice

(*Hastings, Rev Dr. James*)

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4. *Shut in with God,—vss. 7-9.*

The Lord did not answer the suppliant's question at once in the full measure of his desire. Saul had lived hitherto for himself

alone, the absolute master of his purposes and wishes. He had need to ask from no one permission to live, nor how. But now and henceforth he is the slave of another's will, and is to live in the fulfilment of another's plan That will and plan he is to learn from day to day So by Divine direction he enters the city, to await the further manifestation of His purposes, whom henceforth he is to serve

How different that entry from what he had anticipated! No zealous band of fanatical co-religionists met him at the city gates to welcome him to his fierce havoc of the little Church! His blazing eyes went not searching around for the unhappy victims of his wrath! On the contrary, blinded by that ineffable light, which had burst upon him from the heavenly throne, he walked in darkness, obedient and subdued, content to be led by the hands of those who were themselves cowed and bewildered by the awful vision, and so came to his destined lodgings in the street called Straight, where Judas lived

We can imagine Saul had little to say He was alone even when in the company of his friends And, shut in with God, he must have preferred to be shut away from all human companionship. The agonizing experiences of those three days, who can imagine them? Who can adequately portray the horror of those hours, when the recollections, which so often overwhelmed him in his missionary life, came rolling in upon him with fresh and poignant power,—the appalling revelations of that highway vision, that he had made havoc of the saints of God, and with unparalleled bigotry and fanaticism had fought against His exalted and eternal Son! Ah! how he must have bowed in deepest repentance and confession before God, crying for mercy, and imploring forgiveness through the blood of the covenant which he had trampled under foot! Saul had no use for food or drink during those waiting days He spent their darkened hours in an agony of prayer, waiting still the revelation of his Master's will The time no doubt seemed long, but now it is passed The hour has come for the help of brotherly ministries.

Verse 8 Saul seems to have carried the blighting effect of the unearthly light through all his subsequent years —Vs 8 Instantaneous conversion is a great and solemn reality The Spirit of God does not require time for His

saving work—Vss 4-8 Saul was not converted by the miraculous concomitants of "the heavenly vision," but, as every sinner must be, by the Word and Spirit of Almighty God—Vs 9 Saul, blind and dependent, is led by the hands of his friends, but more than all his hand now and henceforth is grasped by a Divine Leader, who will always show him the way.

SUB-SECTION 2—*The Messenger's Ministry,—vss 10-19a*

10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said unto him in a vision, Ananias And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord 11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus, for behold, he prayeth, 12 and hath seen a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight

13 But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem 14 and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon Thy name 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel 16 for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake

17 And Ananias departed, and entered into the house, and, laying his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit 18 And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight, and he arose and was baptized, 19 and he took food and was strengthened

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1 *Authorized,—vss 10-12.* 2 *Reluctant,—vss 13-16* 3 *Obedient,—vss 17-19a*

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1 *Authorized,—vss. 10-12*

This messenger was Ananias,—"a devout man according to the law" He had come to believe in Jesus of Nazareth as his Messiah-Saviour But he seems not yet to have forfeited the good opinion of his fellow-countrymen, because, like many in Jerusalem at a later date, who believed, yet were "all zealous for the law," he still held to the customs which Moses had delivered to them. He does not seem to have held any official station in the little Church, though of this nothing is said in the narrative; and he

was competent to administer baptism, if indeed, as seems probable, Saul received the Sacrament at his hand

To this man of blameless life and prayerful spirit the Lord appeared in a vision He had conversed with his Lord before, and did not need to ask, as did the stricken Saul, "Who art Thou, Lord?" He knew who called him, and instantly he responded, "Behold, I am here, Lord." He receives the unexpected commission to go at once to the house of Judas in the street called Straight, and minister to the needs of the persecutor, who will persecute no more.

Verse 10 When the Lord needs a man He knows where to lay His hand upon him, and is ready to commission him —Vss 10 and 13 Clinging to, and breaking with, the old order of things,—Ananias an illustration of the one, and Saul of the other —Vs 11 The new life begins when one begins to pray The cry of the new-born child says it lives, the prayer of the new-born soul has the same meaning

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2 *Reluctant,—vss 13–16*

Ananias was not Philip. The evangelist, without question or murmur, started at once on his way to the desert road But Ananias stands halting and irresolute. He was acquainted with the persecutor's character and reputation. He knew what dire and cruel business had brought him to Damascus,—"Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon Thy name." He shrank from any mission to such a man We can hardly find it in our hearts to blame him And yet he was blameworthy His mind was so perturbed that he did not give full credence to his Master's assurance,—"The man you dread is not the man you are to meet He came to persecute, but remains to pray. Behold, he prayeth! I ask you to go only where I myself have already been, and have given him a vision of the divinely appointed messenger, through whose coming and ministry he shall receive his sight, and the revelation of my farther will as I now make it known to you." "He is a chosen vessel unto

me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel. for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. Go thy way"

Verses 13-14 There are lions in the path to the timid disciples, as to Bunyan's pilgrim —Many believers are bridge-crossers,—before they come to them —Vs 15 Bearing the name of Jesus,—what a blessed burden! Recall the legend of Christopher,—the Christ-child bearer —Vs 16 This is what the Lord would show him,—is it what the converted persecutor would know?

> "If I find Him, if I follow,
> What His guerdon here?
> 'Many a sorrow, many a labor,
> Many a tear'"

Vs 11 "Behold, He Prayeth"

I Implies he had never prayed before
II Implies that it is a remarkable thing for such a person to pray now
III How great so ever the wonder, it is declared that now he does pray
IV It is implied that now the Lord accepts his prayer —(*Spurgeon*)

Vs 11 Paul's First Prayer

I The text makes an announcement
II It furnishes an argument
III It makes an application —(*Spurgeon*)

Vs 15 A Chosen Vessel

I To be made ready II To be emptied III To be filled

Vss 13-16 An Encouraging Lesson from Paul's Conversion.

I There are other productive forces at work for the Church besides her teaching
II From these sources we may expect remarkable conversions
III The occasional sinking of instrumentality answers admirable ends
IV All this by no means lowers the value of instrumentality

(*Spurgeon*)

3 *Obedient,—vss 17–19*

Before this renewed assurance and positive command all Ananias's hesitation vanishes; and he hastens to fulfill his Master's gracious will It was a memorable meeting—that of the messenger of grace, and the bowed and blind and broken persecutor of the saints Deeply interesting and pathetic is it that Ananias, lately so suspicious and shrinking, should now take the dreaded commissioner of the Sanhedrin to his heart, "and, laying his hands on him, should say, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus who appeared unto thee in the way thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Vs 17 Love in the Heart

I It disarms suspicion
II It embraces the suspected
III It ministers to the mistrusted

Sub-section 3—*Saul, the evangelist,—vss 19b-30*

19b And he was certain days with the disciples that were at Damascus 20 And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God 21 And all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them that called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ 23 And when many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel together to kill him 24 but their plot became known to Saul And they watched the gates also day and night that they might kill him 25 but his disciples took him by night, and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket

26 And when he was come to Jerusalem, he essayed to join himself to the disciples and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple 27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus 28 And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, 29 preaching boldly in the name of the Lord and he spake and disputed against the Grecian Jews, but they were seeking to kill him 30 And when the brethren knew it they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus

1 *In Damascus,—vss 19b–25* 2 *At Jerusalem,—vss. 26–30.*

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1. *In Damascus,—vss 19b–25.*

Saul went to "his own" The days of darkness were gone. Forsaken by his former co-religionists, and not yet welcomed to the brotherhood of believers, he could hardly feel at first that there were any on earth whom of right he could call "his own" But now he tarries with the disciples for a time;—"He was certain days with the disciples that were at Damascus, and straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God." How long a period is covered by the "certain days" of Luke's narrative is not made clear by the historian It appears from the epistle to the Galatians that Saul's sojourn in Damascus was divided into two portions, and that they were separated by an interval of three years which Saul spent in retirement in Arabia For he says that after that episode in his life he returned to Damascus

While Luke says nothing of this retirement his narrative lends itself in quite a notable way to the insertion of some interval in the Damascus ministry, perhaps between the twenty-first and twenty-second verses of this chapter In the twentieth verse the staple of the new evangelist's preaching was that Jesus was the Son of God Nor is this surprising After "the heavenly vision" this must have been the profoundest impression left on Saul's mind,—Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God Day and night this single thought must have possessed and dominated his entire being That this Son of God was also the long-expected Messiah seems to have become an equally profound conviction of Saul at a somewhat later period of his spiritual experiences.

That this Divine Sonship of the Nazarene was the chief if not sole topic of Saul's first ministry in the Damascus synagogues is probable also from the effect of it It did not appear to excite that fierce enmity which the unbelieving Jews afterward manifested They were at present simply filled with amazement at such teaching from such a man,—"And all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them that called on this name?"

But after Saul's return from Arabia, on the supposition that

the silent years are properly located as indicated above, he began at once to show the results of his further studies of the Holy Scriptures, and his long-continued communion with God. For now the chief theme of his preaching was the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. He had increased in strength. His whole intellectual and spiritual nature had been fortified by his better understanding of the Scriptures, and so "he confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ" It was this change in emphasis in Saul's preaching that aroused the bitter and fanatical hatred of the unbelieving Jews He, who at first dwelt so largely upon the Sonship of Jesus, now emphasizes his Messiahship. His enemies could hear with open-mouthed wonder the story of "the heavenly vision," and be silent for very amazement. But that the preacher should declare that their Messiah,—"Hope of Israel, and Saviour thereof in the time of trouble,"—was that impostor and malefactor so recently crucified in Jerusalem under such shameful circumstances,—this they could not and would not stand. And so they took counsel together to kill him, and watched the gates day and night to take him Saul found no way to escape but by his friends letting him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket If his entrance into Damascus several years before had been so different from what he had planned, how much more his departure! He was beginning to learn what things he was to suffer for the sake of the Name!

Verse 20 Saul's first Christian experience was of the Divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth Naturally this was the first truth he preached It is one thing to accept this doctrine as taught in the Scriptures, it is a much more mighty thing to realize it in the heart! Thus did Saul,—and Nathanael, John 1 49,—and Thomas, John 20 28—Vs 21 Amazement is not enough if hearers are to be really benefited by the truth—Vs 22 There is reason to believe that Saul's strengthening took the silent years of the Arabian retirement But then he came forth fully equipped for publishing the glad tidings of a Messiah-Saviour! What he did henceforth, in all his evangelistic tours, he began to do in Damascus He proved of Jesus "that this is the Christ" Saul evidently had his Bible in his retirement and his profound study of it not only settled his own belief as to the Messiahship of Jesus, but he was able therefrom, by the most cogent and unanswerable testimony, to convince or confound all who heard him—Vss 23-25. The Lord cared for His servant, and raised up friends for him But he was not delivered to recline on "flowery beds of ease" He must escape for his life, and for the first of many times he was "in peril from his own countrymen"

Vss 20-25 THE CONVERSION OF PAUL

I The character of his spiritual change
 1 Radical. 2. Genuine 3 Startling
II The nature of his new faith
 1 Growable 2 Discussible 3 Demonstrable
III The spirit of his first auditors.
 1 Their malignity deadly 2 Deliberate 3 Frustrated.
(*The Homilist*)

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2 *At Jerusalem,—vss 26–30.*

The way being barred to his further ministry in Damascus, Saul returned to Jerusalem The violence of his enemies made necessary his hasty departure; and he seems to have left the Garden City without either companionship or commendatory letters to the brethren in Jerusalem A fugitive and alone, and perhaps on foot, he measured the many score miles from the one capital to the other, to find himself in Jerusalem in due time unknown and without credentials. He was indeed well known to the high priest and the ruling powers But under the circumstances he could have had no desire to meet any of them at present. He craved and sought the fellowship of the Nazarenes, and to them he was not known. And when he made himself known they were suspicious of him,—did not believe that he was a disciple,—and shrank from him as one who came among them as a spy to betray them into the hands of their enemies Saul was in a bad way!

Just here the Cypriote, Joseph, great-minded Barnabas, came to his relief How Barnabas knew Saul is not told us They may have been pupils together in the schools of Tarsus,—Cyprus and Tarsus being quite near each other The two men had this in common that they were both Hellenists, and Jews of the Dispersion. Saul, himself a Hellenist, probably first sought the synagogue of the Hellenists, hoping to find among strangers in Jerusalem some one who knew the heart of a stranger, and here he may have met one who was but a sojourner in the city, even Barnabas, who learned his story, and took him to his heart.

He also brought him to the "apostles." Luke evidently uses this term as Paul does himself in Gal 1 19, in a general sense, as

meaning the leading members of the Christian community,—for, as a matter of fact, Peter alone of the original Twelve was in Jerusalem at this time, the James whom Paul mentions not being one of the twelve apostles. Barnabas vouches for his friend before the chief of the believing brotherhood He declares to them "how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus!" This was enough Saul's position was established He won his way into the hearts of all believers, and went in and out among them "preaching boldly in the name of the Lord" And Peter, among the first, warm-hearted, impulsive Peter, took him not only to his heart but also to his home, and Saul abode with him fifteen days Thus Saul gained one of the objects for which he visited Jerusalem He had wanted to see Peter. It was doubtless providential that Saul saw none other of the apostles for fourteen years (Gal 2 1) This made the assertion of the independence of his apostolic commission very much stronger How blessed the fellowship of these two men during those two weeks!

But Saul could not be idle even during those sweet and restful days! His heart turned with longing especially to those who, like himself, were not home-born citizens of Jerusalem It was not the easiest field for evangelistic effort Perhaps for this reason Saul chose it. At any rate, he turned at once to the scene of Stephen's great debate in the synagogue of the Hellenists But these foreign-born Jews were as unapproachable, bigoted and fanatical as in Stephen's day, and, while Saul disputed with them, they began to plot for his destruction They sought to kill him But Saul's life and ministry had become too precious to the saints in Jerusalem to be lightly sacrificed They deemed it wise for him to retire before the storm, and so they brought him down to Cæsarea, that he might go to Tarsus He may have gone part way by water, but the larger part of the journey seems to have been by land, for he says, referring to this period, "Then came I into the regions of Syria and Cilicia" Doubtless he went northward on this journey, preaching the Gospel and winning converts wherever he went, for, in after years, he began his second missionary journey by going through this same region of "Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches."

Verse 26 The yearning of a believing soul is for the fellowship of kindred spirits —Vs 27 Great-minded Barnabas is a type of the friend in need who is a friend indeed —Vs 27 Three things gave value to the commendation of Barnabas he emphasized the facts, (1) That Saul had seen the Lord,—(2) That the Lord had spoken to him,—and (3) That he had preached boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus —Vs 28 "Going in and going out" was a very different life for Saul from the life he used to lead in Jerusalem —Vs 29 Saul was a positive force in Jerusalem. He had many natural affinities for, and sympathies with, the Hellenists But his cogent reasoning and earnest speech excited their opposition, which soon turned to hatred and heart-murder —Vs 30 Once more he escaped, reserved of God's good providence for a more abounding service

SECTION 5 —THE TESTIMONY OF PETER AT LYDDA AND JOPPA,—9 31–43

31 So the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied

32 And it came to pass, as Peter went throughout all parts he came down also to the saints that dwelt at Lydda 33 And there he found a certain man named Æneas, who had kept his bed eight years, for he was palsied 34 And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ healeth thee arise, and make thy bed And straightway he arose 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she fell sick, and died and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper chamber 38 And, as Lydda was nigh unto Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men unto him, entreating him, Delay not to come on unto us 39 And Peter arose and went with them And when he had come, they brought him into the upper chamber and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed, and, turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up 41 And he gave her his hand, and raised her up, and, calling the saints and widows, presented her alive 42 And it became known throughout all Joppa · and many believed on the Lord 43 And it came to pass, that he abode many days in Joppa with one Simon, a tanner

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1 *The state of the Church, making the apostle's itinerancy possible,—vs 31. 2 Peter's visit to Lydda, and the healing of Æneas,—vss 32–35 3 Peter's summons to Joppa, and the resuscitation of Dorcas,—vss 36–43*

1. *The state of the Church, making the apostle's itinerancy possible,—vs. 31*

This condition of the Church is sketched with a rapid pen, and it discloses a very different state of things throughout nearly all Palestine from that which so recently prevailed.

(1) In relation to her enemies the Church had "peace" The storm of persecution for the time being had spent its force One reason for this probably was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. He had been the head and front of a persecution unexampled in bitterness and malignity The removal of such a leader, and his sudden, and to them inexplicable, transfer to the company of the Nazarenes, seems to have demoralized the forces of the opposition And for a time they suffered the brotherhood of believers to go their own way without molestation Some writers also find an explanation of this lull in the violence of persecution in the fact that just at this time the attention of all the Jews was absorbed in, and excited by, the sacrilegious command of Caligula to install his own statue, as an object of divine worship, in their Holy Temple So the enemies of the Church had enough to think about, without seeking to destroy the little communities of believers in Jesus of Nazareth Whatever the explanation, "the Church had peace"

(2) In her spiritual condition also she was being "edified" The historian's word may signify either internal or external upbuilding and strengthening, or both More commonly in New Testament usage it refers to spiritual growth, and this is probably the reference here, inasmuch as the closing word of the sentence emphasizes the material and outward progress of the Church Spiritual edification points to a Divine Artificer The internal life and progress of the Church were due to the presence and mighty working of the Holy Spirit And we may well believe that this Divine Agent then, as now, made use of the truth as it is in Jesus as the instrumentality with which He wrought So, the preaching of the truth central to the Gospel,—the sacrificial and atoning death and triumphant resurrection of the Son of God,—led, everywhere throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, to the building up and strengthening of the household of faith

(3) In her daily living she was "going forward," under two mighty influences, viz—(a) "The fear of the Lord," and (b) "The

comfort of the Holy Spirit." It is worth our while to gather the exact import of these suggestive expressions, and the relations which the one sustains to the other. "The fear of the Lord" is a genuine and needful phase of religious experience. There is, it is true, a "fear that hath torment," but it is also true that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" And "godly fear" is as important and needful an element of vital piety as the most tender and loving spirit of trust in the soul's Best Beloved The sense of obligation can never be submerged in the ecstasies of love

"Going forward" in the "comfort of the Holy Spirit" is not less important than walking in "the fear of the Lord" The word here used by Luke is the one applied to Barnabas The apostles called him a "son of consolation,"—a "son of comfort," or, as in the Revised Version, a "son of exhortation." So here we may read "comfort," "consolation," or "exhortation" of the Holy Spirit Which shall it be? In the literal meaning of the word we may find a combination of the two interpretations, and so come to an assured rest in what is probably the very mind of the Spirit. The word signifies "one called to the side of another," and refers not to a paid advocate, but to the friend, who being called voluntarily comes to one's aid, and stands by him in the time of need In this sense is the Spirit our Advocate And to "walk in the comfort of the Holy Spirit" is to realize that He is ever at our side, and to invoke His constant presence and help

And it is not difficult to see that, unless we go forward in "the fear of the Lord," we cannot hope to have the supporting companionship and all-powerful advocacy and comforting of the Holy Spirit

(4) In her external prosperity she was being "multiplied" This happy experience of the primitive Church was not a chance. It was the natural result of the working of all those elements of life and power of which the historian has made mention. The Church which has peace, and is advancing in spiritual strength, and is going forward in reverential regard for God's holy mind and will, and in ever new revelations and experiences of the presence and grace of the Holy Spirit,—such a Church will continually draw into her fellowship multitudes attracted by her saintly character, and longing for the peace which they see she possesses in such abounding plenty.

Vs 31 THE CONDITIONS OF PROSPERITY.

I. Peace without and peace within.
II. A life of godly fear
III The presence and ministry of the Spirit

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2. *Peter's visit to Lydda, and the healing of Æneas,—vss 32–35*

Lydda,—ancient Lod, and modern Ludd,—is one of the old towns of Palestine, and lies in the territory originally allotted to Benjamin In the early Christian centuries, under another name, it became a city of considerable size and importance, but there is reason to believe that in Peter's day it was, what it had been from earliest times, and what it is now, a village of comparative insignificance That it should be chosen as the scene of a notable and influential miracle illustrates the Scripture that God often chooses weak things to confound the mighty The village is on the road from Joppa to Jerusalem, and is beautifully situated on the eastern border of the plain of Sharon, upon the top of a low hill, from which there are commanding views of the plain in all directions The foothills of the central ridge of Palestine are in the near prospect on the east, and the Mediterranean farther off in the west, while the maritime plain stretches far beyond the horizon both north and south. There are two principal routes by which the traveler may go up from Lydda to Jerusalem,—one of these being now used by the railroad from the coast to the capital The ascent is quite fatiguing to the pedestrian, there being a rise in altitude of twenty-five hundred feet from the village to the city, while the distance is only about twenty-five miles

It was doubtless by one of these two routes that the itinerating apostle found his way down to Lydda, after completing the circuit of the Churches in the hill country. It had not been a holiday visitation over so mountainous a region, and Peter found it convenient to break his journey at the foot of the hills, and on the border of the wide-spreading plain And so the apostle "came down" to Lydda

He came to visit "the saints that dwelt there" And there he

met with Æneas It is not said that Æneas was a disciple; and some writers, as it would seem on insufficient grounds, have thought he was not a believer But, whether a believer or not, he was in a bad way For eight years he had been a bed-ridden paralytic. Peter, in the name of his Master, heals him. The manner in which the apostle addresses him is worthy of note, and suggests Peter's other great miracle at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. There he said to the congenital cripple,—"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" Here he says, "Æneas, Jesus Christ healeth thee, arise and make thy bed" The notable thing in both cases is that he disclaims any power to help in himself, and invokes the mighty name of the Messiah,—Jesus the Nazarene And in the one case as in the other the invocation is not in vain The paralytic "straightway arose," and doubtless rolled up the pallet on which he had lain a helpless invalid for years The power of the ever-blessed Name gave him perfect soundness in the presence of all the people

The tidings of this wondrous work of healing went abroad beyond the confines of the little village "And all that dwelt at Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord" This expression,—"turned to the Lord,"—doubtless had a freshness of meaning in apostolic times which it has lost to modern ears, yet it is deeply significant Their conceptions of the risen and exalted Messiah-Saviour now underwent an entire change, and, recognizing Him as their Sovereign Lord, they turned from all wicked ways to follow Him The voice of the merciful miracle was as the voice of the preacher in the porch of the Temple,—"Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out" And so mightily did the persuasive truth prevail, that all who dwelt at Lydda and in Sharon, seeing the paralytic fully restored, now turned in penitence and faith to the Lord Christ

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Verse 32 The preaching of the exiles had not been in vain Scattered in the persecution they carried with them the sacred fire—Vs 33 Weary years are often appointed to suffering saints, but God has not forgotten them—Vs 34 Jesus alone can heal the maladies of body and soul; all other powers, whether men or medicines, are but instruments

"The Great Physician now is near,
The sympathizing Jesus"—

Vs 35 How we are turned to the Lord is a matter of little moment, the vital thing is the turning

Vss 32-35 PETER AT LYDDA

The miracle

I As expressing the genius of Christianity
II As symbolizing the mission of Christianity
III As indicating the power of Christianity
IV As representing the grandest influence of Christianity

(*The Homilist*)

Vs 34 ÆNEAS

I The paralytic of the text reveals a present-day condition and need
II The panacea for all the ills of life is found in Jesus Christ
III We may learn from this subject the need of self-effort
IV The text teaches also that true conversion leaves no doubt
V We see also the power of influence

(*Drew Sermons on 1909 Golden Texts.*)

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3 *Peter's summons to Joppa, and the resuscitation of Dorcas,— vss 36-43*

The apostle's presence in Lydda was in pursuance of his visitation of the Churches He came to Joppa because he was sent for This seaport city was ten miles to the northwest from Lydda, and across the beautiful plain of Sharon The little Church of believers in Joppa was in trouble. Tabitha was dead! We know but little of her beyond her double name; but, through this simple narrative, her fame has become world-wide and eternal. She had been a most useful member of the Christian community, and her death was a sore bereavement to her fellow-disciples The sorrowful event brought to the apostle Peter the occasion of the mightiest wonder-work of his ministry so far as the Scripture record enables us to judge

The story raises two questions of unusual interest,—viz : (1) Why did the believers at Joppa send for Peter? Was it only that they might receive the comfort in their affliction, which they might reasonably hope to obtain through the ministrations of one of the Lord's honored apostles? Or were there some, who remembered that the Master Himself, pitying an afflicted mother, had resusci-

tated the young man of Nain, "who was the only son of his mother and she a widow,"—and also, in tearful sympathy with the sisters of Bethany, had called Lazarus even out of the grave: and was this their thought,—What the Master did for His children in sorrow, may He not enable His servant to do for us in our affliction? It certainly would seem as if their expectations looked beyond the comfort of a transient visit Were not their hearts set on something more, and hence the urgency of their message, for which otherwise there seemed to be no pressing need? They could not spare so useful a saint; but, if anything is done it must be done quickly, and before these precious remains are laid in the tomb. So Peter gets the call of their insistent spirits,—"Delay not to come on unto us" And when he came, did he not find in the tearful company of that upper chamber such power of faith as grasped the possibility of the restoration to life and service of their departed sister? So much we surely believe

(2) Why did Peter go about this wonder-work in a manner so different from his course at Lydda? In that miracle there seems to have been no manifest preparation in faith and prayer of either healer or healed Peter was brought into the company of the paralytic, and without preliminaries said to him, Æneas, Jesus, the Messiah, healeth thee, arise and make thy bed." But here the apostle locks the door on the whole company of weeping mourners, that he may be alone with God and the dead! Why this unusually solemn preliminary? Was it that Peter had never before been used of his Lord for the accomplishment of a supernatural work so like His own at the grave in Bethany? Was it because he saw in his brethren faith "to believe great things of God," and now sought for himself faith "to undertake great things for God"? We wonder! And, while we wonder, we recall that other wonder-work of an earlier age, when, less than one hundred miles north of Joppa, and on this same maritime plain, Elijah was alone in the loft at Zarephath with the little dead boy, while he agonized in prayer for the resuscitation of the only and well-beloved son Would it be strange if Peter, kneeling at the bedside of the dead saint, and buttressing his faith in the power of the wonder-working God, should have cried in his heart, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" He, who gave the victory to the faith and prayer of the prophet of old, now crowns with triumph the supplication and con-

fidence of His faithful apostle And, when Peter said, "Tabitha, arise, she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up." The struggles and triumphs of that hour Peter does not disclose. It is enough that he called the saints and widows, "and presented her alive" And when the wonderful tidings spread abroad throughout the city, "many believed on the Lord"

Verse 36 The most useful servants of the Church must sooner or later come to the end of their labors—Vs 38 The condition of eminent service is supereminent faith, not only in the worker, but also in those among whom he is called to labor Even Jesus could not do many mighty works among the people who did not believe—Vs 40 The accomplishment of a great work for God demands the girding of one's spiritual forces at the mercy-seat, and victory with God alone The patriarch had power with men after he had gained power with God Peter had triumphed before he spoke to the dead saint The real struggle and victory came to the apostle while on his knees—Vs 42 All Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord upon the healing of Æneas Not so in greater Joppa Under the influence of the mightier work of the resuscitation of Dorcas, the historian can say, not "all," but only "many believed on the Lord" The village and rural community are often more easily and powerfully influenced by the truth than the busy, thronging center of civic life

Vss 39-40 DORCAS RESTORED TO LIFE

I Her character II Her death III Her restoration to life
Simeon (*Horæ Homileticæ*)

Vss 36-43 DORCAS.

I. The ministry of death
  1. Interesting in person
  2 Christian in character
  3 Useful in society
II The ministry of life
  1 The organ }
  2 The power } of this life.
  3 The blessedness }

(*The Homilist*)

SECTION 6—THE TESTIMONY OF PETER BEFORE CORNELIUS,—10:1-48.

SUB-SECTION 1—*The vision of Cornelius,—vss 1-8.*

1 Now there was a certain man in Cæsarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, 2 a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always

3 He saw in a vision openly, as it were, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, Cornelius. 4 And he, fastening his eyes upon him, and, being affrighted, said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God 5 And now send men to Joppa, and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter 6 he lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side

7 And when the angel that spake unto him was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually, 8 and having rehearsed all things unto them, he sent them to Joppa

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1 *The centurion's character and habits,—vss 1-2.* 2 *The message of the angel,—vss 3-6* 3 *The obedient soldier,—vss 7-8*

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1 *The centurion's character and habits,—vss. 1-2*

The story of this centurion of Cæsarea reminds us of a notable characteristic of all the Roman officers of similar grade mentioned in the sacred narrative They were not cruel and bloodthirsty men, as might be inferred from their profession of arms On the contrary, they were mild-mannered persons, singularly open to the truth, and profoundly impressed by the character and living of those who were specially charged with its dissemination among their fellow-men Such was the centurion, whose servant the Lord healed, in response to his extraordinary faith, and who so loved the Jewish people as to build them a synagogue in Capernaum Such, too, was the centurion of the crucifixion Charged with the execution of Pilate's edict he was not an indifferent spectator of the tragedy of Calvary. Deeply stirred by what he saw beneath the darkening skies, and heard in the heartrending cries and final surrender of the Divine Victim, he could but add his testimony,—

"Truly this man was the Son of God." In like manner the centurion of the "Augustan Band" was the kind-hearted Julius He was commissioned to conduct Paul and other prisoners from Cæsarea to Rome, and once and again he courteously treated the apostle, and permitted his friends to minister to his necessities: and by gentle stages brought him to Rome, and delivered him to the "honest and soldierly Afranius Burrus," the humane Prefect of the Prætorian Guard

In keeping with that of these Roman officers was the character, official and personal, of Cornelius the centurion of Cæsarea. The Roman army, in the time covered by Luke's narrative, was made up of the legionaries and auxiliaries, the latter having substantially the same organization as the former The legion consisted of 6,000 men, divided into ten cohorts of 600 each, each cohort into three maniples of 200 each, and each maniple into two centuries of 100 each. The legionaries were not sent into Syria and Palestine until the war under Vespasian and Titus, which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem The army of occupation in the Holy Land, therefore, at the time of Peter's visit to Cæsarea, was made up of auxiliaries recruited from various nations, and which were never sent for military service into their native countries. Among these auxiliaries was one cohort recruited chiefly in Italy, and therefore called the "Italian cohort," or "band" as our version has it. Of this cohort Cornelius was one of six centurions, and his separate command consisted of one hundred men.

Such was the official station of Cornelius Personally, and in the sight of men, he was both humble and benevolent. The former we should not have looked for in an officer of proud Rome. But that he was of a lowly spirit appears from the fact that he was willing to learn of divine things from a captive people Whether he had become a proselyte of the Jewish faith does not clearly appear. His religion, it seems, was not a mere round of religious observances. It took on the practical character of helpfulness to his fellowmen "He gave much alms to the people"

And before God he was both prayerful and devout Not only did he "pray to God always," but made it the practice of his daily life to keep the customary hours of devotion It was while "keeping the ninth hour of prayer in his house" that the heavenly vision was vouchsafed him.

Cornelius was also "devout" as well as prayerful. The word here translated "devout" is not indeed the same as that which describes the sojourners in Jerusalem at Pentecost, or the men who buried Stephen, though the meaning is substantially the same,—the word in those cases distinguishing the devout life as one of godly fear, and the word here used emphasizing the conditions of acceptable worship.

The application of these terms—"prayerful and devout—to the centurion raises the question,—Was Cornelius a saved man, or, as we should say, Was he already a Christian? Some things in the narrative incline us to say Yes. (1) How else can we interpret the historian's words,—He was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" We may well ask ourselves, In what stronger terms could we describe a saved man? (2) What meaning are we to attach to the words of the angel,—"Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God," if they describe not the reception accorded to the pious exercises and life of a saved man? (3) Still further, what significance has Peter's words on entering the Cæsarean home, except as the statement of a general principle, of which the centurion's case is a special example,—"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him" Is it likely that an inspired apostle would use such words in addressing an unsaved person?

On the other hand, there are some considerations which more decidedly incline us to say No, to the question, Was Cornelius a saved man? (1) The mission to Joppa would seem to have been a needless embassy, except on the supposition that here was a man with all his house, who, though their faces were turned toward the light, needed the revelation of Jesus Christ as their all-sufficient Saviour. (2) This, indeed, is taken for granted in the message of the angel, as Peter reports it to his brethren of the circumcision,—"Send men to Joppa," was the direction, "and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house" There would seem to be no possible interpretation of these words, that does not find back of them the fact that Cornelius was as yet unsaved.

We must admit, then, that the affirmative answers to this ques-

tion are not conclusive, while the negative response seems to be decisive and incontrovertible. Having reached this judgment, though it may seem to lead us into the region of speculation,—a speculation, indeed, not wholly unprofitable,—we may venture to ask another question bearing upon the character of the centurion, viz. —Would he have been saved, had he passed from this mortal life before receiving the visit and message of the apostle?

In seeking a proper answer to this question, we must not lose sight of two fundamental truths One is that salvation is possible to man only through Jesus Christ. All who are ever saved must be saved by the atoning death "In none other is there salvation, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." The other truth equally fundamental is that the merits of Christ's atoning death become available for man only through the sovereign and gracious operation of the Spirit of God No better statement of this truth can be given than that of the Westminster Assembly,—"We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ by the effectual application of it to us by His Holy Spirit" And, still further, "The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling" These statements of wise men are in full accord with Holy Scripture, but neither it nor they can be properly interpreted as teaching that the Divine Spirit operates only in this way He is a gloriously independent Spirit, who, as these same Westminster Divines say, "worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth" And we must believe that in some instances, comparatively rare indeed it may be, He may savingly influence unto eternal life those who have never heard of Christ with the hearing of the ear

And if this seems incredible to us, we may ask ourselves How are infants dying in infancy saved? Is it because they are such sweet and innocent creatures? Then are there two classes among the redeemed,—some who are saved by the blood of Jesus, and some by their sweetness and innocence. And this cannot be, for there is but one way of salvation, and there is but one class among the redeemed All are saved by the effectual application to them, by the Holy Spirit, of the redemption purchased by Christ Ordinarily this is done by His working faith in us, but in a multitude

of cases, as in the infantile world, it is done without the conscious exercise of faith And this the gracious Spirit may do, in some instances, however infrequent, of those who are living up to the light already given them, and who are seekers after God, and, though blindly, are yet feeling after Him, with their faces toward the light Such a man was the centurion The Divine Spirit was dealing with him before Peter received his commission in Joppa. Cornelius was not yet a saved soul, but the perishing of such a spirit for want of an intelligent vision of the Saviour Christ for whose salvation he was waiting, is unthinkable.

No discouragement of the missionary enterprise can be drawn from this conclusion It is still true, as a general rule, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," and the question is still pertinent, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" The sad fact is that very few, if any, are living up to the light they have, and they need, and must perish without, the vision of the atoning Christ The state of that household in Cæsarea was such as, not to justify leaving them to themselves, but for speedily bringing to them the voices of grace And hence the heavenly vision

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Verse 1 The heavenly message fits the person and the place As the angel's announcement to the shepherds came to simple-hearted men, who loved communion with the skies, so here this blessed evangel came to the serious seeker after God And Cæsarea, a city wholly separated from Jewish history, and vitally connected with the wide-spreading realm of Rome, was eminently the place for such a new departure in the growth of the kingdom of God —Vs 2 They who seek shall find, to them that knock it shall be opened The centurion was seeking God, and God was seeking him

Vss 1–2 THE CENTURION

I The subject ⎫
II The instrumentality ⎬ of conversion
III The efficient cause ⎭ (*Wadsworth, Rev Dr Charles*)

Vss 1–6 THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS

I His unfavorable surroundings
II His good character
III What did Cornelius still want?
IV How was the change brought about?

(*Gerberding, Rev G H*)

2 *The message of the angel,—vss 3-6*

It was a memorable day, and three o'clock in the afternoon, when the heavenly messenger came Cornelius had been praying,—doubtless for light and a fuller knowledge of God. He was "keeping the ninth hour of prayer" This fact is suggestive. We know that dwellers and sojourners in Jerusalem were in the habit of frequenting the temple courts at the hours of prayer, the times of the daily oblation morning and evening Only from this narrative do we learn the probability that serious-minded people throughout the land were accustomed to make those hours the time of personal and household devotion Deeply interesting is the fact, if the centurion's habit was general, as seems probable, that in the homes of God-fearing Israel all over the country, when the lamb was being offered in the House of the Lord at Jerusalem, His people were everywhere bowing the knee in holy worship,—their right of access to God guaranteed by the blood of the daily oblation

To the Roman officer under such circumstances and at such a time the angel came Why an angelic messenger? It was enough to send Ananias to Saul of Tarsus Why should a messenger from the heavenly realms be commissioned to visit Cornelius? The answer is not far to seek A new and wonderful era in the history of God's dealings with His Church was opening up It was an epoch that kindled Paul's exuberant enthusiasm as he wrote of his own relation to it to his Ephesian brethren Now was about to be made the wondrous revelation of "the mystery, which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" The household of Cornelius was to be the first of all the Gentile world to receive a welcome to the household of faith without first becoming Jews And the believing Israelites were to learn for the first time that the glad tidings of salvation were intended for all other people as truly as for themselves Surely it was fitting that the first step in the unveiling of such a marvelous mystery should be taken by a messenger from the Throne!

More wonderful than the appearance of the angel was the limitation of his commission It was not given to him to uncover the mystery This honor, by Divine choice, was to be given to mortal

man. The heavenly messenger may stand at the portal; it is given to Peter, an apostle of Jesus, to swing wide the gates and bid the multitudes come in The angel's hands are holden; he cannot welcome this Gentile family into the family of God. He can only say, "Send men to Joppa; the herald of the world-wide evangel is in the tanner's house: bring him, and hear his words,"

> "He brings salvation on his tongue,
> And words of peace reveals"

Verse 3 Stated times for worship are an aid to faith God condescends to meet us in the times and ways of His own appointment—Vs 5 If we faithfully use the light God gives us, He is sure to give us more —Vs 5 Even angels cannot be the heralds of the cross To sinful men is committed the glorious Gospel of the blessed God

Vs 4 THE EARTHLY LIFE VIEWED FROM HEAVEN

I Who spoke these words?
II To whom were they spoken?
III. The truths they were intended to teach us—(*DeWitt, Rev. Dr. John*)

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3 *The obedient soldier,—vss. 7-8.*

The apparition vanished, the angel departed But the centurion was not disobedient to the heavenly vision Promptly, as one accustomed to obey orders, he set about executing the angel's command He manifests no disappointment that the light for which he had been praying did not come at once from the lips of the heavenly messenger His attitude was "Send, Lord, by whom Thou wilt send" He has waited at the mercy-seat for the answer to his cry, he will now wait for that answer till God's accepted time shall come

But he will wait in the path of obedience. He will send for the messenger. Among the soldiers of his command there were doubtless some who did not sympathize with their commanding officer. He will not entrust them with such a commission. He gives it to "a devout soldier," who, some have conjectured, was the

man who afterwards wrote our second Gospel,—the evangelist Mark, and two of his domestic servants They waited on him continually and were in sympathy with his spiritual longings

And so urgent was he that they seem to have been dispatched at once We reverently imagine that pilgrim trio marching down the caravan road that thirty-five miles to Joppa The shadows of evening were falling a few hours after they left Cæsarea, and somewhere on the way, perhaps at Apollonia, they found a resting-place for the night; for it was noon on the next day before their journey was completed, and they stood before the tanner's gate

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Verse 7 Happy the obedient household that is served by devout and obedient servants —Vs 7 If the soldier was Mark, we see how his training under the Roman centurion fitted him to understand the Roman character and to write that narrative, which has been called the "Gospel to the Romans,"—the Gospel, according to Mark

SUB-SECTION 2 —*The vision of Peter,—vss 9–23*

9 Now on the morrow, as they were on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour · 10 and he became hungry and desired to eat but, while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11 and he beholdeth the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as it were, a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth 12 wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill and eat 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean 15 And a voice came unto him again a second time, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common 16 And this was done thrice and straightway the vessel was received up into heaven

17 Now while Peter was much perplexed in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold the men that were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood before the gate, 18 and called and asked whether Simon, who was surnamed Peter, were lodging there 19 And while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee 20 But arise, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting for I have sent them 21 And Peter went down to the men, and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek what is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22 And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous man and one that feareth God, and well reported of by all the nation of the Jews, was warned of God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words from thee 23 So he called them in and lodged them

1 *The trance,—vss 9-16* 2 *The messengers,—vss. 17-23a.*

1. *The trance,—vss 9-16*

Luke's narrative unveils the process of preparation of both preacher and hearer for the coming interview We have seen how Cornelius and his household were made ready to welcome the glad tidings. The story now reveals the way in which Peter was made ready and willing to proclaim the joyful news to the people of an alien race Peter was a man of prayer His closet in the tanner's home was on the housetop On that flat roof he found the mercy-seat, and there secluded from the gaze of men by the battlements, which according to the law had been erected for the protection of human life, and with the expanse of heaven above him, he brought his petitions before his glorified Lord. What was Peter praying for on this memorable day? From the answer Cornelius received we infer that he had been asking for light on the way of salvation We gather that the Church at Antioch was burdened with the lost condition of the outlying world, because as she "ministered to the Lord and fasted," she received the missionary commission In like manner we determine the object for which the apostle prayed from the answer he received from the opened heavens Peter must often have pondered the relations of the Gospel to the Gentile world How could the great commission to preach the Gospel to every creature be fulfilled without breaking down the ages-old and apparently divinely-sanctioned restrictions of the Jewish economy? Must all men become Jews in order to their becoming Christians? And, if not, how could one, who had been taught and trained neither to eat nor drink, nor in any way associate, with alien people, bring to them the message of the Gospel? This problem must often have perplexed the apostle of the Circumcision Perhaps this day the problem pressed for solution with unusual persistency· and, unable to solve it himself, he carried it to the Lord in prayer

It pleased the Lord to give him a full and unequivocal answer The answer came, not through an angelic messenger, as the centurion's came to him; but in the vivid visions of a trance Peter's vision hardly needs an explanatory word for ourselves. The lesson is plain The time had come when no mortal man, of whatever nationality on earth, could any more be called "common and un-

clean." Three times the strange message descended from the skies To us the vision needs no interpretation, for Peter the interpretation was waiting at the gate.

Verse 9 The closet on the housetop —Vss 11–13 The Divine ways of the Divine revealings,—Ananias to Saul,—the angel to Cornelius,—and the trance to Peter —Vs 14 The wisdom and reason of the Mosaic regulations as to food, and the clean and unclean They kept the chosen people separate from their heathen neighbors

Vss 9–30 THE POWER OF PRAYER

I Prayer is a characteristic of the godly
II It conduces to progress in the divine life
III It brings together in a Christian fellowship persons who have been separated
IV It unites all true hearts in the service of the Lord Jesus

(*The Homilist*)

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2 *The messengers,—vss 17–23a*

The apostle did not at first see in the vision the answer to his prayer. He was much perplexed, and was trying to study it out, when the Spirit's message came,—"Behold, three men seek thee; but arise, and get thee down, and go with them nothing doubting, for I have sent them" And this message at first seemed rather a diversion than a solution of his perplexity As with many a child of God, Peter was to learn that light follows service To the believer the way opens as he walks in it The message brought to Peter from Cæsarea speedily found in the apostle's mind a most vital articulation and connection with the vision of the housetop The soldier's message was this, "Cornelius a centurion, a righteous man and one that feareth God, and well reported of by all the nation of the Jews, was warned of God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee." What more was said we are not told

Peter does not hesitate to go, but an immediate journey is impracticable, and so he called the messengers in and lodged them till the next day Would we might have been told something of

the conferences of that memorable afternoon and evening. And how busily opened the hours of the next morning, in preparing for the journey, and the summoning of faithful witnesses, who might hereafter attest the critical events of this memorable and decisive movement. All this is left to our imagination. But this we know; late on the third day from the opening of the chapter ten men start out from Joppa to go to Cæsarea They were Peter, and the three messengers of the centurion, and the six chosen companions of the apostle They were so late in getting off, that they must needs break their journey *en route,* as the outgoing messengers of Cornelius did, and perhaps at the same place; and so it came about that it was in the afternoon of the fourth day when they reached the home of the centurion in Cæsarea. With what slow and deliberate movement marched on these mighty events, that ushered in a new and wonderful era in the history of the Church of God! In our day, and with our modern methods of locomotion, Peter could have stood before Cornelius within four hours after the angelic vision God works in infinite leisure. The world was perishing for the great evangel, but it took four days to open wide the Gospel gates!

Verses 17-19 The vision is not self-interpreting, but God sends the interpretation coincident with the vision God's providence and God's work often illuminate each other—Vs 20 Light will come on dark things in the path of obedience—Vs 22 The servants' certificate of their master's character,—(1) A righteous man,—(2) One that feared God,—(3) Faithful in his house,—(4) Of good repute among the Jews,—(5) Acting under the guidance of the holy angel,—(6) And sending for a disciple of the Nazarene.

SUB-SECTION 3—*The meeting and the testimony,—vss 23b-48.*

23b And on the morrow he arose and went forth with them, and certain of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him 24 And on the morrow they entered into Cæsarea And Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his kinsmen and his near friends 25 And when it came to pass that Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him 26 But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up, I myself also am a man 27 And, as he talked with him, he went in, and findeth many come together: 28 And he said unto them, Ye yourselves know how it is

an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to join himself or come unto one of another nation, and yet unto me God hath showed that I should not call any man common or unclean 29 wherefore also I came without gainsaying, when I was sent for I ask, therefore, with what intent ye sent for me?

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel, 31 and saith, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thy alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God 32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call unto thee Simon, who is surnamed Peter he lodgeth in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the seaside 33 Forthwith therefore I sent to thee, and thou hast well done that thou art come Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord

34 And Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons 35 but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him. 36 The word which He sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) 37 that saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached, 38 even Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him 39 And we are witnesses of all things which He did, both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem, whom also they slew, hanging Him on a tree 40 Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be manifest, 41 not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead 42 And He charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is He who is ordained of God to be the judge of the living and the dead 43 To Him bear all the prophets witness, that through His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all that heard the word 45 And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ Then prayed they him to tarry certain days

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1 *The meeting,—vss 23b–33,*—(1) *The inquiry,—vss 23b–29,*—(2) *The response,—vss 30–33* 2 *The testimony,—vss 34–38,*—(1) *The address,—vss 34–43,*—(2) *The result, vss 44–48*

1. *The meeting,—vss. 23b–33.*

It was indeed a memorable meeting No such coming together of Jew and Gentile had ever taken place in the history of re-established Judah. All parties to the interview evidently regarded it as a pregnant event. The principals in the great transaction knew they were acting under a Divine impulse. They knew not what was to be the outcome of this day's procedure. Peter, led of the Spirit, entered the Gentile's house. He was burdened with a message to that waiting company. On the other hand, Cornelius, not less manifestly led by a mysterious power, met the apostle to receive from the stranger Jew and man of God a message of salvation Is it strange that the soldier of Rome fell in profound homage at the feet of the soldier of the Cross? But Peter will not suffer such homage. He raises the centurion to his feet, and, entering with him into the place of assembly, finds opportunity to propound,—

(1) *The inquiry* He would know wherefore he had been summoned from Joppa He had broken away from the traditions of his people He had done that which his countrymen would call unlawful, and that for which his own believing brethren will call him to account "I ask therefore,"—this is Peter's question,—"with what intent ye sent for me?" "I have been taught not to call you or any man common or unclean, but I have not been told why I have been summoned to this extraordinary and lawless course."

(2) *The response,*—of the centurion is at hand He promptly assures his visitor that he had obeyed the command of a supernatural messenger in sending for him "Four days ago," he says, "at this very hour I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer." Then the command came He believed the man he had been directed to send for had something to say worth hearing, and in this faith he had gathered his kinsmen and near friends together to hear the heavenly communication. The company in the centurion's house was a model congregation;—(1) They were all present,—(2) They were present in the sight of God,—(3) They were present to hear all things that had been commanded of the Lord. Blessed indeed is the preacher to whom has been given a message of salvation and a congregation divinely prepared to receive it! The outcome must needs be the glory of God, and eternal life for dying men. It was so here, as we shall see.

Verse 23b We must ever take care that our good be not evil spoken of. The six men were to be witnesses—Vs 24. The unselfishness of a sincere seeker after God he will have others share the blessing he is about to receive—Vs 28 Caste and class shall be obliterated by the Gospel—Vs 33. There were two opinions about Peter's visit to Cæsarea,—this of Cornelius, "Thou hast well done that thou art come,"—and that of the believing Jews (11 ·3)

Vs 26 A Man

I Only a man, not a god
II A man, with a man's needs and possibilities
III A man with a Divine message

Vs 29 The Model Preacher

I The conscious bearer of a Divine commission—borne in prayerfulness and faithfulness
II He has to do with fundamental and saving truth
III He seeks the wisest adaptation of his message

Vs 33 The Model Congregation

I It is numerous,—embracing family and kindred
II It is devout,—gathered together in the sight of God
III It is teachable and obedient,—to hear all things commanded of the Lord

Vs 33 The Model Congregation

I Punctuality of attendance
II Devoutness of spirit
III Practicalness of purpose—(*The Homilist*)

Vs. 28 Christianity vs Exclusiveness

I. True Christianity is adapted to every man in all aspects of his being
II Earnest and humble efforts after a complete knowledge of the truth will be gloriously rewarded
III It is the duty of all who have the truth to disseminate its blessings (*Parker, Rev Dr Joseph*)

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2. *The testimony,—vss. 35–48.*

The opening words of Peter's address have been much misunderstood, and have been interpreted in such a way as to render this entire mission of the apostle to this Gentile home wholly use-

less. Some would have us believe that not only these people, but all people in every age and place, who do the best they can and live an upright moral life may be sure of salvation, irrespective of their acceptance or rejection of Christ. That this is not the apostle's meaning is evident from the fact that he immediately goes on to reveal the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer, whose Divine nature and competence for the work of eternal redemption are certified to us by His resurrection from the dead.

(1) This address emphasizes a number of vital points. The glad tidings he preached were tidings of peace. They came to them, as to all, through "Jesus of Nazareth,—He is Lord of all." His earthly ministry had been one of benevolence, and full of works of healing and mercy. He had been anointed of God with the Holy Spirit and with power. Yet He had been crucified,—"whom also they slew, hanging Him on a tree" But God had raised Him from the dead

This central point in Peter's address is presented with great brevity, indeed, but with extremest care,—(a) God had raised our Lord from the dead on the third day,—(b) He had caused Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but to pre-appointed witnesses, (c) These witnesses not only saw Him, but also ate with Him, and drank with Him, after He had risen from the dead,—(d) These witnesses had received a solemn charge to proclaim this risen Saviour as ordained of God to be the judge of the living and the dead,—(e) To this risen Nazarene all the prophets give testimony that through His name every one who believes shall receive the remission of sins.

(2) The result of Peter's testimony was wonderful. That Gentile company was visited from on high by the Divine Spirit. The order of events is notable, (a) They "heard the word." It was a message of full salvation through a prophesied, crucified, and risen and exalted Christ,—exalted to be their Saviour, and ordained to be the judge of the living and the dead That full and gracious and solemn word they heard with more than the hearing of the ear. They received it into their hearts. As Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened so that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul," so this Cæsarean household attended to the apostle's words, and believed. (b) Then followed the descent of the Holy Spirit He fell upon them as upon the one hundred and

twenty in the beginning He did not need to come to them now in saving power, He had already so come as they heard the word And now He falls upon a company of believers Whether in tongues of parting flames we are not told, but for an outward sign to the unbelieving, and for the satisfaction of the chosen witnesses (c) The amazement and conviction of the witnessing Jews came in natural sequence They were astonished at this display of the mercy of God They heard these Gentiles speaking with tongues and magnifying the grace of the Lord There was no resisting the evidence that they, too, were made fellow-heirs with their Jewish brethren of redeeming love through Jesus Christ (d) Their formal enrollment in the Church of Christ, by their baptism, as the Lord commanded, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

So this mighty step in the development of the Church of Christ is taken, and the way is open for the world-wide commission to be fulfilled With divine and visible sanction the Gospel may now be preached among all the nations of mankind

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Verses 34-35 God is not indifferent to the good works and upright lives of those who so serve Him, not yet knowing Christ They are acceptable to Him now, and He will reveal Himself to them more clearly in His own good time and way —Vs 36 Jesus Christ is Lord of all So Paul concludes,—"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him the Name that is above every name"—Vs 42 The witnesses were charged with a two-fold duty, viz —(1) To testify the Gospel of the grace of God, and (2) To proclaim the Nazarene as the appointed judge of the living and the dead —Vs 43 The witnesses of Jesus confirm the witness of all the prophets, and all alike certify to the fullness and glorious sufficiency of salvation through faith in His ever-blessèd Name!—Vs 44 The Spirit fell on the congregation just when Peter was dwelling on the fullness of Christ Nothing pleases the Spirit so much as the exaltation of Jesus —Vss 47-48 The acceptance of Christ and the reception of the Holy Spirit precede the baptism of believers in the Triune Name!

Vs 36 Preaching Peace

I Peace.

II The way of peace

III The messenger of peace

Vs 36 THE MESSAGE OF PEACE

I What it implies
II What it proclaims
III What it demands

Vs 38 THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

I Anointed of God with the Spirit and with power
II A busy ministry, everywhere doing good and healing
III Accompanied by indubitable tokens of His Father's presence

Vss 39-40 THE WITNESSES

I They testified to His life, death, and resurrection
II They were pre-appointed to this very service
III They ate and drank with Him after His resurrection

Vs 34 DIVINE IMPARTIALITY

I God does not respect persons in the same sense that man does,—i e, limited, superficial, selfish, popular, and adventitious
II Nor in disturbing for any the settled conditions of happiness
III Nor in the sense of limiting His salvation to any particular class
1 The merit of the atonement is sufficient for all
2 The force of moral motives is adapted to all
3 The agency of the Holy Spirit is available to all

(*The Homilist*)

Vs 38 THE GREAT ITINERANT

I Let us consider Him
1 His object,—"Doing good"
2 His mode of accomplishing this object,—"He went about"
3 His motive,—Could not help it,—Displaying the glorious attributes of God
II Let us consider ourselves
1 As to the past
2 As to the future —(*Spurgeon*)

Vs 38 THE MODEL HOME MISSION, AND MISSIONARY

I The model home mission
II The model home missionary
III The duty of imitating the works of the Great Master —(*Spurgeon*)

Vs 38. Lives That Lift

I The life that lifts is sympathetic
II The life that lifts is cheerful and hopeful
III The life that lifts is a pure life
IV. The life that lifts is a spiritual life—(*Purves, Rev Dr. G. T*)

Vs 38 The Example of Jesus in Doing Good

I Our Saviour's great work and business in the world
II His diligence and industry in the work
III Persuasives to imitate His example—(*Archbishop Tillotson*)

Vss 30–44 Cornelius and Peter

I How Cornelius found Peter.
II How Peter found Cornelius
III In what condition Peter found Cornelius
IV What kind of a man Peter found Cornelius
V. How Peter preached to Cornelius and his friends
(*Nelson, Rev Dr. H. A*)

Vs 41 God's Witnesses

I To what were they witnesses
II. Before whom were they witnesses
III What kind of witnesses were they—(*Five Hundred Sketches.*)

Vss 40–41 Witnesses of the Resurrection

I The probable effect of a public exhibition of His resurrection
II. Humanly speaking only a few could be made instruments
III Every great change is effected by the few, not by the many
(*The Homilist*)

Vss 1–48 The First Gospel Sermon to the Gentile World.

I The preacher, scene, and audience
II The supernatural preparation
  1 The angel's visit to Cornelius
  2 Peter's vision
    (1) His spiritual exercise and physical state before, and mental state at the time
    (2) His strong antagonism to the grand purpose of the vision
    (3) The providential agency by which this antagonism was overcome.

III The leading truths of this first Gospel sermon.
  1 God's impartiality.
  2 The mission of Christ
IV The immediate results of this first Gospel sermon.
  1 The effusion of the Spirit
  2 The production of true faith
  3 The gift of tongues
  4. The administration of baptism—(*The Homilist*)

SECTION 7—THE TESTIMONY OF PETER BEFORE THE CIRCUMCISION,—11.1–18.

1 Now the apostles and the brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3 saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them

4 But Peter began, and expounded the matter unto them in order, saying, 5 I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descending, as it were, a great sheet let down from heaven by four corners, and it came even to me 6 upon which, when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw the four-footed beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and birds of the heaven 7 And I heard also a voice saying unto me, Rise, Peter, kill and eat 8 But I said, Not so, Lord· for nothing common or unclean hath ever entered into my mouth 9 But a voice answered the second time out of heaven, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common 10 And this was done thrice· and all were drawn up again into heaven 11 And behold, forthwith three men stood before the house in which we were, having been sent from Cæsarea unto me 12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, making no distinction And these six brethren also accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house 13 and he told us, how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, Send to Joppa and fetch Simon whose surname is Peter, 14 who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house 15 And, as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit 17 If then God gave unto them the like gift as He did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God? 18 And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life.

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1 *Peter's return to Jerusalem,—vss. 1–2a* 2 *The complaint of the strict Jewish believers,—vss. 2b–3.* 3 *The apostle's defence and vindication,—vss 4–18,*—(1) *Rehearsing the facts,*—(2) *Emphasising* (a) *The two visions,* and (b) *The gift of the Holy Spirit.*

1. *Peter's return to Jerusalem,—vss 1–2a*

We should gladly have received a more detailed account of all the events occurring in this transition period in the Church's progress But as to some of them the sacred annalist has been guided to absolute silence, or, at best, to "a mere glance in passing" One of these is the apostle's return to the capital Peter had gone out upon a tour of evangelization and visitation of the Churches It was the only tour he made by himself, so far as is mentioned The providence of God had guided his going down to Lydda, and over to Joppa, and up to Cæsarea And the Divine Spirit had dealt wondrously with him and through him in all these places The return journey is dismissed in a single line He had good tidings for Zion He was not indeed the first bearer of the good news He had tarried a few days in the centurion's house for the confirmation of that household's faith, and so the tidings had gone ahead of him

By what route Peter returned to headquarters,—whether through the city of Samaria, and over the hills of Ephraim,—or by way of Antipatris, through which Paul was afterwards brought down to Cæsarea,—or in the way by which he himself had come down through Lydda and Joppa,—we are not informed Deeply interesting would it be to have been told how Peter journeyed back to the capital, after the wonderful experiences through which the Lord had led him But Luke's narrative gives us no light here We know only that Peter did not go up to Jerusalem by himself The six men who had accompanied him from Joppa to Cæsarea continued with him in this return journey, and were with him in the Holy City,—to support him in meeting the complaints and criticisms of them of the circumcision These had soon to be met

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Verse 1 "Received the word of God" means the same as "Heard the word" of 10 44, and "Repentance unto life" of 11 18

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2 *The complaint of the strict Jewish believers,—vss 2b–3*

Many in Jerusalem were doubtless ready to receive Peter with a glad welcome, and were waiting with the greatest possible interest for the confirmation by his own lips of the wonderful tidings

which had come to their ears But evidently there were some who were inclined to give him a different sort of reception And these immediately entered complaint against him,—"Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them" We are almost ready to lose patience with such people Here is God's servant returned from a campaign of victory. He had been used of the Lord in healing the incurably sick, and raising the dead, and opening the gates of salvation to the Gentile world Through his ministries the Gospel had taken a tremendous stride forward in the fulfilment of "the great commission" And the result had been such as should have set them to singing hallelujahs But the only thing in these wonderful tidings on which their critical ears had fastened was the fact that Peter had eaten and associated with the uncircumcised heathen!

And who were these people so ready to complain,—so irresponsive to the unprecedented movements of their day? We must not overlook the fact that, though narrow-minded, they were, nevertheless, true believers in Jesus Christ Some good people are very narrow We freely confess it, but at the same time confidently claim that such believers do not by any means possess a monopoly of this quality And something is to be said on behalf of these complaining Jews They had been trained for ages and generations in this attitude of exclusiveness The restrictive regulations of the law had been ordained in mercy to the chosen people, that they might be kept from apostasy And their natural thought was,—The reason for the law remaining, the law itself abides And in the course of years they had become overstrict in the construction of the law and its application Only through their own fault the commandment which had been ordained unto life they found to be unto death And so it came about that when we should have expected the whole heavens to become vocal with anthems of praise for a spreading and triumphant Christianity, our ears are saluted by the discordant notes of a carping criticism,—"This man has violated the time-tried traditions of our fathers, and has gone in to eat with the uncircumcised and unclean"

They believed they were standing for a principle They sincerely believed the Gospel of the kingdom was to be preached among all nations But just as truly they believed that it was needful for all who accepted this Gospel to be circumcised and to keep

the law of Moses! In other words, to them there was no entrance into the Christian Church but through Jewish gates. Differences on this question resulted in one of the most persistent controversies of the early Church. It met the apostle Paul everywhere, and at every point hindered and harassed his ministry. And, if it took a vision from the opened heavens to broaden Peter's conception of the application of the Gospel, we need not be surprised to find that it required a decree of the first Christian General Assembly to deliver Gentile believers from this yoke of bondage to the Mosaic Institutes And even then for many years, many believers in Jesus were "exceedingly zealous for the law"

Verse 2 Differences are best settled, and misunderstandings removed, by a frank face-to-face conference—Vs 3 The porter at the gates of a new epoch may expect censure, possibly martyrdom

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Peter was not unwilling to placate his criticizing brethren, by relating all the circumstances of his visit to Cæsarea So we have,

3 *The apostle's defence and vindication,—vss. 4-18,*—rehearsing the facts, and emphasizing the two visions, and the gift of the Holy Spirit

The apostle rightly judged that no discussion of the right or wrong of his conduct in the centurion's house would be of any avail He believed a plain, unvarnished story of the whole transaction would be his best vindication And so he proceeds to rehearse the events which had brought to them such disquieting tidings,—"expounding the matter unto them in order," and telling the story with which Luke's narrative has already made us familiar

It is needless for us to re-traverse the tale We cannot but be struck with the skill with which Peter manages his defence in telling of the events referred to Especially are we to note two things, on which the apostle places special emphasis

The first is the two visions, his own and the centurion's. He had been divinely guided. His prayer for guidance had been answered in a strange, unique way. By the vision of the great sheet let down from heaven, and filled with all manner of living crea-

tures, among which he was bidden to satisfy his hunger, he had been taught to call no man common or unclean, and so had been prepared for the summons to Cæsarea. Cornelius, too, had been divinely guided in sending that summons to the tanner's house in Joppa. He had been warned by an angel from God to do what he had done, and had been assured that he should hear from God's servant a saving message,—the word by which he should be saved, he and all his house.

By thus emphasizing the supernatural elements in this transaction Peter convinced his Jewish brethren that what they had criticized in his conduct had been done, not through any private pact with the Gentile centurion, and in wanton disregard of the divinely established order, but by revelation from on high both to him and to the Roman soldier.

Peter's critics were thus prepared for the other part of his story, on which he places a fitting emphasis, i e., the reception by his Gentile hearers as he spake of the gift of the Holy Spirit. There was no getting around this evidence of the Divine approval of what had been done And the closing question of Peter's defence was unanswerable,—"If then God gave unto them the like gift as He did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?"

The apostle's critics were convinced,—possibly some of them only silenced as to the unchanging claims of the Mosaic ritual. But those who were convinced made their ungrudging and cordial acknowledgment,—"Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life."

Before we pass from this testimony of Peter before the circumcision, it is worth our while to pause a moment to note the full import of these closing words,—"Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life." We are in danger of becoming so interested in the swinging of the gates through which the Church marches into a new era, as to forget the real significance of the spectacle here presented,—an evangelist preaching the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified and risen Redeemer to a company of lost heathen, who in this proclamation are summoned to repentance of sin and faith in this atoning sacrifice. The gates are wide enough for the world; but to the individual soul they are narrowed to the one condition of "repentance unto life,"—that "saving

grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience."

Verse 4 A plain statement of facts is more valuable than any amount of argument—Vs 4 There is need for great patience in dealing with those who criticize our conduct The fact that we are undoubtedly in the right does not warrant any ruthless and domineering course—Vs 5 Blessed the places of our sojourning if they be hallowed by our daily prayers Abraham's altars and the tanner's housetop tell of the joys of a Divine Communion—Vs 14 The word of the truth of the Gospel is a saving word —Vs 17 To the clear intimation of the Divine Will the child of God bows in unquestioning obedience—Vs 18 All true and saving repentance is the grant of a sovereign and gracious God,—"Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins" (5 31)

Vs. 18 Life Granted to the Gentiles

I The fact acknowledged
II The surprise manifested
III The approbation expressed—*Simeon* (*Horæ Homileticæ*)

Vs 18 Success vs Objections

I The success of the missionary enterprise should silence objections
II It should lead all Christians to glorify God for His great goodness
III It should stimulate us to go forward with increasing vigor, zeal, and confidence—(*Alexander, Rev Dr Archibald.*)

Section 8—The Testimony of Barnabas,—11 19–30

19 They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord 22 And the report concerning them came to the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem and they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch 23 who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the

Lord; 24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord 25 And he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul, 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the Church, and taught much people, and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch

27 Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world which came to pass in the days of Claudius 29 And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea 30 which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul

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1 *The occasion of his testimony,—vss 19–22,—(1) The two evangelistic companies,—vss 19–20,—(2) The success of the second group,—vss 20–21,—(3) The commission of the Mother Church,—vs 22.* 2 *The character of his testimony,—vss 23–26a,—(1) Generous and sympathetic,—vs 23a,—(2) Emphasizing essentials,—vs 23b,—(3) Influential,—vs 24,—(4) Unselfish,—vss 25–26a* 3 *The consequences of his testimony,—vss 26b–30,—(1) Great advancement,—vs 26b,—(2) Wide-spreading spirit of loving service,—vss 27–30*

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1 *The occasion of his testimony,—vss. 19–22.*

The determination just here of the chronological order of three events in Luke's narrative is of some importance, and of great difficulty These are the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch,—the visit of Peter to Cornelius,—and the preaching of the evangelists in Antioch Luke seems not always to tell the story of events in the order of their occurrence, and this may be the case with these three But we should have no difficulty in believing the order of the narrative to be the order of time but for Peter's statement before the assembly of apostles and elders, in which he claims (15 7) that God had chosen "through him" to open the doors of Gospel grace to the Gentiles As this undoubtedly refers to his preaching in Cæsarea, this event would seem to have preceded the other two It may be said, indeed, that Peter's words refer only to the public and formal admission of the Gentiles to the privileges of Christian discipleship; and if the work of Philip and of the men of Cyprus and

Cyrene did precede his visit to Cornelius, they were nevertheless only private and sporadic cases, which do not really militate against the justice of Peter's claim. This may be admitted as to Philip's preaching on the desert road, but the explanation is hardly adequate as to the work in Antioch.

There were two groups of evangelists who traveled up the Syrian coast as far as Antioch, at the time of the persecution that arose on the death of Stephen The one group confined their ministrations to their fellow-countrymen, the Jews. The other company, natives of outlying countries, Jews of the Dispersion, were gifted with a wider outlook, and exercised a broader ministry They were on the highway of travel to the north; and it is not only possible but probable that tidings of Peter's work at Cæsarea may have overtaken them as they journeyed northward. And so it came about that, following apostolic example and the impulses of Christian benevolence, when they came to Antioch, they "spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus"

"And the hand of the Lord was with them· and a great number of them that believed turned to the Lord" This success is predicated, not of the whole company of evangelists who entered the Syrian capital, but of the second group whose ministries were devoted to the Gentiles There were many Jews residing in Antioch; but they must have formed a comparatively small part of the immense population of that great city And the "men of Cyprus and Cyrene" left them to the care of their fellow-workers, while they turned with compassion to the teeming myriads gathered from all nations, "who were as sheep having no shepherd," and proclaimed to them the glad tidings of a Saviour come to seek and to save the lost It was their ministry the Lord blessed; and from among them, the Gentile peoples, a great multitude believed, and evidencing the genuineness of their faith turned from their wicked ways to serve the Lord Christ. The success of the Gospel among them was so great that tidings of these triumphs of grace speedily went abroad, and moving along the lines of common travel soon came to the ears of the brotherhood of believers in Jerusalem.

Greatly stirred and quickened by the news, the Mother-Church decided to send a friendly deputation along the track of these zealous evangelists, to note the character of their work, and to confirm the faith of believers. It is the conviction of some that this

commission was sent down to Antioch in the spirit of unfriendly criticism and censure, or at least of "approval with reserve." There seems to be hardly any adequate reason for this judgment. If we have rightly determined the order of events, these Antiochean evangelists were doing only what the apostle Peter had already done in Cæsarea,—a procedure which the Mother-Church had tacitly approved That the mission to Antioch was conceived in a fraternal spirit is further evidenced by the fact that they chose Barnabas for the responsible work Joseph, "son of consolation," we have come to know as "the great-minded Barnabas." He was broad-minded and conciliatory in disposition: and, being himself a native of Cyprus, in the nature of the case was likely to scan with a kindly eye the work of his Cypriote brethren in the foreign capital. If the Mother-Church's message to Antioch had been one of fault-finding and restraint, Barnabas would certainly not have been chosen as the messenger His testimony, it might have been taken for granted, would be of an entirely different character, as we shall see

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Verse 19 Persecution often multiplies the Church, but never destroys it. —Vss 19-20 The strict and liberal Jews evangelizing Antioch are followed substantially by the modern Church in propagating her divisions on heathen soil—Vss 20-21 The preaching that wins the Divine approval and a multitude of souls is "the preaching of the Lord Jesus"—Vs 21 The "hand of the Lord" insures the victory—Vs 21 True faith precedes and insures genuine repentance—Vs 22 Waiting for, and true interest in, tidings of the progress of the kingdom

Vs 23 Personal Christianity

I. Personal Christianity is essentially identified with Divine Grace
II Also wherever it exists it is an observable fact
III. Also in its extension it delights the heart of the good.
IV Also it requires on the part of its subjects the most persevering effort

(*The Homilist.*)

Vss 20-21 The First Preaching at Antioch

I The spontaneous impulse these men obeyed
II The universal obligation on all Christians to make Christ known.
III. The simple message they proclaimed
IV. The Mighty Helper who prospered their work

(*Maclaren, Rev. Dr. Alexander.*)

Vss 27-30 CHRISTIANITY AT ANTIOCH.

I The entrance of Christianity into Antioch
  1 Evil overruled for good
  2 Invincibility of Christian courage
  3 The legitimacy of lay preaching
  4 The universality of the Gospel
II The achievements of Christianity at Antioch
  1 A divine change in the character of many
  2 It attracted the attention of the Mother-Church
  3 It led to the settlement of Barnabas and Saul in the city for twelve months
  4 It gave the disciples a new name
  5 It developed a new spirit of benevolence among the people
    (1) Individual,—(2) Proportionate,—(3) Prompt,—(4) Judicious—(*The Homilist*)

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2 *The character of his testimony,—vss 23-26a*

That the testimony of Barnabas was generous and sympathetic might be inferred from the character of the man The record is a very suggestive one,—he "came,"—and "saw the grace of God,"—and "was glad" Visitors to a foreign land are said to see generally just what they go to see, whether it be, e g, in India, tigers or missionaries! Barnabas went down to Antioch expecting, from the tidings which had come up to Jerusalem, to see wonderful manifestations of the grace of God And he found the half had not been told It filled his heart with gratitude and thanksgiving He entered with heart and soul into the work, and "was glad" Some of the brethren at Jerusalem might have stood off in an attitude of inquiry if not hostility, but not so Barnabas It was enough for him to see that the Hand of the Lord had been with his brethren, and that here before his eyes was a real work of God's Spirit It immediately received his hearty and sympathetic support With what joy he testified the glory of the risen Redeemer, and proclaimed the Gospel of the grace of God!

The testimony of Barnabas was more than sympathetic. He wisely emphasized the essential thing, as, "son of exhortation" that he was, "he exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they

would cleave to the Lord" The Church was about to enter upon her career of world-wide conquest Great questions were coming up Difficult problems were about to arise for their solution Divisive influences would soon be felt Even in their own city, and from among their fellow-converts of the children of Israel, would spring up some to deny their equal birthright privileges among the elect of God How they were to overcome all these difficulties, and tread the narrow way through all these obstacles, he might not know, and could not tell. But one thing he knew; and this would be the open sesame from all their entanglements, i e., "Cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart."

That such a testimony would be vastly influential we may well believe "Much people was added to the Lord" Two things explain, as doubtless they contributed largely to, the rapid growth of the rising faith One was the preaching of a person rather than a religion or system of belief The other was the character of the preacher by whom the message was brought The importance of a creed cannot be over-estimated A right apprehension of the truth necessitates the orderly arrangement and statement of its various parts, and the coordination and correlation of these parts and aspects of truth eventuate in a system of faith But the great work of an evangelist is the heralding, not of a system, but of a person It was so at Antioch The men of Cyprus and Cyrene "preached the Lord Jesus" Barnabas exhorted the new converts "that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" The stronghold of the Christian religion is in the fact that a divine-human heart is at the center of it all, and that all over the world sin-weary and heavy-laden men may hear the alluring invitation,—"Come unto ME," with the Divine and comforting promise,—"And I will give you rest."

The other thing, bearing on and explaining the power and influence of the testimony of Barnabas, is brought out in the suggestive arrangement of Luke's narrative,—"He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith and much people was added unto the Lord" Evidently the sacred writer would have us note that character is more than gifts in building the kingdom of God It was not so much what Barnabas preached as what he was. His message was vastly important, but the personality behind the message gave it weight, and made it mightily influential. Be-

cause he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, therefore much people was added to the Lord. The benign character of Barnabas was in keeping with his benign mission.

With such a character we are not surprised that unselfishness marked the course of the great-minded Barnabas. The commissioner from Jerusalem had not been long in Antioch before he saw a mighty field opening out to the followers of Christ. It was a field, too, preëminently fitted for the working of a master mind. There was just one man to fill the place. That man was Saul of Tarsus. And Barnabas started out to find him. He found him in his native city, whither he had made his way, when driven from Jerusalem to escape his enemies; and he brought him to Antioch.

This was an unselfish thing for Barnabas to do. He bore himself the commission of the Church of Jerusalem. He was not destitute of qualifications for fulfilling it with credit and fidelity. The great field was open to him. His own great, immediate and honorable advancement seemed assured. But he thought of the work, and then he thought of Saul He knew that Saul possessed super-eminent qualifications for the field; and so, without delay, he went for him In doing this Barnabas could hardly have been blind to the probability that Saul would speedily overshadow him, and that from the first place he must soon descend to the second. But this contingency was nothing to him. The great thought in his mind was not the place of Barnabas in the Church, but the work before the Church, and the best way most speedily to accomplish it (See my "Companion Characters," page 283)

Verse 24 Comparative estimate of character and gifts as kingdom builders —Vss 23–24 When believers "cleave unto the Lord," unbelievers are awakened, and "added unto the Lord"—Vs 25 The wise choice of men for fields of labor —Vs 25 Self-seeking must be laid aside when the interests of the kingdom are considered

Vs. 23 The Exhortation of Barnabas.

I What he saw,—"The grace of God"
II. What he felt,—"He was glad"
III. What he said,—"He exhorted them that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord."—(*Maclaren, Rev. Dr Alexander.*)

Vs. 23 Barnabas at Antioch

I. Where the grace of God exists it will be seen.
II The exhibition of Divine Grace is a source of peculiar joy to the people of God
III The designs of Divine Grace can be realized only by constant adherence to Christ.—(*Five Hundred Sketches*)

Vs. 24. A Good Man.

I Has his heart changed
II. Has come to Christ by faith
III Is a true penitent for sin
IV. Is correct in the articles of his faith
V Leads a holy life—(*McDowell, Rev Dr John*)

Vs 24a. On Goodness

I. A good man is a converted man
II. He is an open and steadfast believer
III. He is a man of piety and devotedness
IV. He is a man of enlightened and active beneficence
V. He is a man whose spirit and life are governed by the Gospel
(*McParlan, Rev. Patrick.*)

Vs. 26 What the World Called the Church, and What the Church Calls Herself.

I. The world called the disciples "Christians"
II The Church calls herself "disciples,"—"believers,"—"saints,"—"brethren"—(*Maclaren, Rev Dr. Alexander*)

Vs 26 The Antioch Christians

I. They were LIBERAL Christians,—Liberal as distinguished from Jewish exclusiveness
II. They were DECIDED Christians;—Because they became known as "Christ's Men," they received the new and honorable name.
III. They were PRAYERFUL Christians·—Their work was a divine work, —"The hand of the Lord was with them,"—"The grace of God" was upon them,—"The power of the Holy Spirit" was in them;—And they sought Divine aid.
IV. They were MISSIONARY Christians,—They gave freely their best men to the work of world-wide evangelization.

3 *The consequences of his testimony,—vss 26b–30.*

The results of this unselfish testimony of a noble life and faithful ministry are noteworthy. The advancement of the Church is so wonderful as to constitute an epoch in her development She received her new and honorable name in this great Gentile city,—"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" This name we may be sure was not self-assumed The disciples called themselves "believers," "brethren,' those of "the Way," etc Neither could the name have originated with the Jews They called the disciples "Nazarenes" They would never have profaned the name of Messiah,—Christus, by giving it to this new and pestiferous sect It must therefore have been given them by the heathen,—possibly in ridicule, but certainly in involuntary attestation of two important facts,—(1) The great growth of the brotherhood of believers,—and (2) The unworldly consecration of their spirits So widespread had the new faith become that a new name was imperative They could not call them Jews any longer. Probably the larger number of disciples were not Jews Christianity was breaking from her Jewish shell, and she must have a separate and distinctive name And in view of their supreme devotion to the Lord Christ, what more appropriate name could they give the disciples than to call them "Christ's Men,"—for such indeed they were And, whether given in ridicule or not, it soon became a name of honor, distinctive and worthy.

The growth of the Church was not in numbers merely A wide-spreading spirit of loving service as truly marked the wondrous development of the Blessed Cause Famines are great calamities, but to the followers of Christ they furnish great opportunities. And a city with its accumulated resources is not likely to feel a famine so soon as smaller places It was so with Antioch in the great famine in the reign of Claudius Cæsar. Through the faithful testimony of Barnabas and Saul the young and growing Church of Antioch was quick to grasp the opportunity to minister in loving service to the Mother-Church in her time of need. And her debtors they were Having received from her so abundantly in spiritual things, it was fitting that they should minister to her in carnal things. And this they did, sending their gifts to the elders

by the hand of Barnabas and Saul. So, out of dire calamity, came a loving, united and co-working Church of both Jews and Gentiles.

Verses 29-30 The service of love wants but the opportunity

Vs 26b THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS

I They were disciples
II They held a system of religious doctrines peculiar to themselves
III They were actuated by powerful motives which marked their characters with strong peculiarities
IV They manifested extraordinary strictness and purity of conduct
V They were addicted to prayer, and other exercises of devotion
VI They exhibited a practical and impartial philanthropy
VII They showed great zeal and diligence in propagating their religion.
(*Bacon, Rev Dr Leonard*)

Vs 26b ON BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

I What is it to become a Christian?
II How to become a Christian
III Why should you become a Christian?—(*Coyle, Rev. Dr Robert F.*)

Vs 26b THE CHRISTIAN NAME

I Whence did it come?
II What did it mean?
III What the special significance of the time, place, and circumstances of its origin?—(*Cox, Rev Samuel*)

Vs 26b THE CHRISTIAN NAME.

I The origin of it
II The meaning of it
1 A sign of their separation
2 Also that the Christian religion was intensely personal.
3 Also that their interests and Christ's interests were one
(DeWitt, Rev Dr John)

Vs 26b WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

I Is one who has accepted Christ as a personal Saviour
II One who bears the name of Christ
III One who is trying to follow in Christ's way
IV. One who is enlisted in the cause of Christ
V. One who will be admitted into heaven—(*The Treasury*)

Vs. 29. The Gifts from Antioch

I. Every man gave in this service of relief
II. Every man gave with spontaneous decision
III Every man gave according to his ability

Section 9—The Testimony of Peter's Deliverance,—12·1–25

Sub-section 1—*Herod's Day of Power,—vss. 1–7.*

1 Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the Church 2 And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword 3 And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter, also And those were the days of unleavened bread 4 And when he had taken him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him forth to the people 5 Peter therefore was kept in the prison, but prayer was made earnestly of the Church unto God for him 6 And when Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards before the door kept the prison

7 And behold, the angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the cell; and he smote Peter on the side, and awoke him, saying, Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands 8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals And he did so And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me 9 And he went out and followed, and knew not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision 10 And when they were past the first and the second guard they came unto the iron gate that leadeth into the city, which opened unto them of its own accord and they went out, and passed on through one street; and straightway the angel departed from him 11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a truth that the Lord hath sent forth His angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews 12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying 13 And, when he knocked at the door of the gate, a maid came to answer named Rhoda 14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for joy, but ran in, and told that Peter stood before the gate. 15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad But she confidently affirmed that it was even so And they said, It is his angel 16 But Peter continued knocking· and when they had opened, they saw him, and were amazed 17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him forth out of the prison And he said, Tell these things unto James, and to the brethren And he departed, and went to another place

1 *The capricious cruelty of Herod's power,—vss 1–6;—(1) The martyrdom of James,—vss 1–2,—(2) The arrest and imprisonment of Peter, —vss. 3–6 2 The supernatural thwarting of that power,—vss 7–17; —(1) By the angel of the Lord,—(2) Through the prayers of the Church,—vss 11–17*

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1. *The capricious cruelty of Herod's power,—vss. 1–6.*

The Herod here mentioned is known in history as Herod Agrippa I. He is the sixth member of the famous, or infamous, Herodian family, who came to royal power. By the favor of Caligula he obtained the tetrarchy of Trachonitis, with the title of king. Later the emperor gave him the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, his uncle, which included Galilee and Perea And when Claudius, his early friend, reached the imperial throne, he gave him also dominion over Samaria and Judea; so that, after various vicissitudes of fortune, he became at length enthroned over the entire dominion of his grandfather, Herod the Great, with some pretensions to the title he coveted and which Josephus gives him, of "Agrippa the Great."

He shared also the murderous propensities of his grandfather, who slaughtered the infants of Bethlehem. and of his uncle, who beheaded John the Baptist And he became the third member of this bloody triumvirate by the martyrdom of James the brother of John His cruelty was more capricious than theirs. A pagan at Cæsarea, and ready to accept even divine honors from a heathen populace, he was an orthodox Jew in Jerusalem, and a great stickler for the temple ritual. And whether here or there, by this or that, his motive was to curry favor with the people. To win the Jews, so recently added to his realm, he is ready to stamp out the pestiferous sect of the Nazarenes, and so delivers the apostle James to the martyrdom of the sword

James thus becomes the proto-martyr of the apostolic company. He had belonged to the inner circle of the friends of Jesus. On the mount of transfiguration, and in Gethsemane, he had been one of the chosen three to witness the glory and the agony of his Divine Lord. He doubtless shared his brother's fiery zeal, and the name the Saviour gave them, "Sons of Thunder." That brother was destined to linger on life's stage and ministry for many years, while

he, the first of all his brethren, receives the martyr's crown. Why he should experience the royal cruelty we are not told. Perhaps his thundering evangelism aroused the special enmity of the unbelieving Jews, and Herod saw that it would be a stroke of popular policy to remove the obnoxious preacher from the earth He, no doubt, himself personally, did not care If the new religion had been on the winning side, the capricious king would probably have taken an ostentatious place among the Nazarenes

And then,—not still that he cared himself,—but because he saw that "it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also" He intended to kill him, and that, too, in some public way, that would manifest his special interest in the Mosaic institutes, and gratify the rage of the Jews, by doing to death the most prominent leader of the Nazarenes But not for a moment would he think of such a deed of blood during the passover week! A worthy successor of the Lord's accusers, who would not disqualify themselves for eating the passover by entering Pilate's judgment hall, he would not stain the solemnities of the great feast with the blood of even a Nazarene! And so he went through the ceremonies of that memorable week with murder in his heart, and purposing to make that festival of the springtime more memorable by the public execution of the Lord's most notable follower

He got Peter in his power, and put him in prison It would seem as if Herod had heard of the mysterious escape of the apostles from the custody of the Sanhedrin and of the officers of the temple, and, determined that there should be no repetition of that experience, he took special pains to so bind and guard the apostle that escape should be impossible Sixteen soldiers, four for each watch of the night, were detailed to guard the prisoner To two of each four Peter was bound by two chains; and the other two were stationed at the inner and outer doors of the prison, which was probably a cell in the fortress of Antonia With such precautions Herod might well believe the prisoner was secure, and would be forthcoming on the day of execution

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Verse 1 The biography of Herod,—a life full of opportunities and privileges unimproved and abused—Vs 2 The biography of James —a son of Zebedee and Salome, and, with his father and brother John, a fisherman of Galilee,—called to be a fisher of men,—surnamed a "son of thunder,"—

ready to call down fire from heaven upon the inhospitable Samaritans,—seconding his ambitious mother's request that he and John might sit on either side of their Lord in His heavenly kingdom,—in the chamber of the dead maiden in Capernaum,—in the night on Hermon's transfiguration heights,—in the gloom of Gethsemane,—and, last of all, in the sudden call to the martyr's crown —Vs 4 "Man proposes, God disposes"—Vs 5 Barred gates are often unlocked by prayer,—the prayers of the saints

Vs 6 THE SLEEPING PETER

I On the mount, Luke 9 32 II In the garden, Matt 26 26
III In the prison, Acts 12 6

Vss 7-8 THE ANGEL'S THREEFOLD COMMAND

I Rise II Dress III Follow

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2 *The supernatural thwarting of that power,—vss 7-17*

There were forces at work in behalf of the imprisoned apostle, with which the capricious tyrant had failed to reckon His bars and bolts and soldier guards were impotent against the power of the angel of the Lord And Peter was easily delivered "out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" The narrative of the annalist is clear and deeply interesting It needs no explanatory comment We need only summarize the various details of the picturesque and vivid story. Peter is sleeping! He has no need to watch! The Lord is watching over His own! Yet how wonderful that the apostle can sleep, knowing that he is marked for death, and that the day is fast drawing nigh! "So He giveth His beloved sleep" Then came the flashing light,—the loosening chains,—the hurried toilet,—and the dazed apostle following his angel guide, to find himself in the city street, and to realize only then that his Lord had interposed for his deliverance. How wonderful the story! How impotent the power of this capricious puppet of mighty Rome, when confronting the forces of the omnipotent Jehovah!

Another force also had escaped the reckoning of the tyrant

The Church at the mercy-seat in believing prayer is omnipotent. And the Church was praying for Peter. "Prayer was made earnestly of the Church unto God for him." Peter was sleeping, but the Church was awake and praying. In Mary's house "many were gathered together and were praying" This prayer-meeting seems to have been prolonged into the later watches of the night And this prayer of the saints had power; and Peter was delivered. The promise was fulfilled to them,—"And it shall come to pass that before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear,"—(Isaiah 65:24).

How strange yet vivid the story. The knocking Peter,—the watching, wondering maid,—the astounded circle of prayer,—and the apostle's wonderful tidings! It was an ever-memorable night in the experience of the little Church! What an aid to faith! What an incentive to prayer! What a testimony, invincible, overwhelming, to the risen and enthroned Christ, exalted to the right hand of God, and invested with all power in heaven and on earth! Peter's deliverance from prison by the hand of the angel of the Lord Christ was a demonstration of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Verse 10 Divine guidance, always real, is most manifest when most needed—Vs 11 "Peter, left to himself, came to himself"—Vs 12 The apostolic Church in prayer,—1 14,—4 24,—12 12,—and 13 2-3—Vss 13-15 Rhoda,—(1) A messenger of glad tidings,—(2) Discredited and libeled—Vss 13-16. Doubts are settled not by speculation, but by trial Opening the door for one moment was worth more than a night of wondering and questioning—Vs 17c and Vs 11 Assurance of safety is not inconsistent with prudent avoidance of possible danger

Vss 5-17 Peter's Deliverance from Prison

I The strength of the helpless
II. The delay of deliverance
III The leisureliness of the deliverance
IV The delivered left to himself as soon as possible
V The unbelieving astonishment of the believing men who pray, at the answer to their prayer—(*Maclaren, Rev Dr Alexander*)

Vss 3-17. The Weakness of Satan

I. He cannot render unavailing the intercessions of the good
II He cannot destroy the moral peace of a good man
III He cannot prevent the visitation of angels to the good
IV. He cannot prevent the frustration of his own purposes.
(*The Homilist*)

Vs 10 The Iron Gate.

I Matter is the servant of the spirit
II Difficulties give way to men who are walking in the path of duty.
III Walking under the guidance of God, our faith shall ever be toward what is higher —(*The Homilist*)

Vs 17 Our Deliverances.

I The Lord should have the glory of them
II We should encourage our brethren by the rehearsal of them

Sub-section 2 —*Herod's Day of Doom,—vss 18–25*

18 Now as soon as it was day there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter 19 And when Herod had sought for him and found him not, he examined the guards, and commanded that they should be put to death And he went down from Judea to Cæsarea, and tarried there

20 Now he was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon. and they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was fed from the king's country 21 And upon a set day Herod arrayed himself in royal apparel, and sat on a throne, and made an oration unto them. 22 And the people shouted, saying, The voice of a god, and not of a man 23 And immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministration, taking with them John, whose surname was Mark

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1. *The cruel execution of the guards,—vss 18–19* 2 ***The suppliant cities, and the pact of peace,—vs 20*** 3 ***The brilliant assembly,—vs. 21.*** 4. ***The ascription and usurpation of divine honors,—vs. 22*** 5 ***The stroke of death,—vs 23*** 6 ***The growth of the Church,—vss. 24–25.***

1 *The cruel execution of the guards,—vss 18–19.*

At first thought we should say this was an illustration of Herod's power rather than an element in his doom It was both "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad" was a heathen proverb, never more clearly exemplified than in the case of the great Agrippa The question, indeed, will immediately arise, Were not the guards, under military law, amenable to the penalty of death? Sleeping on guard, in all armies of men, has certainly always been visited with the extreme penalty This is doubtless true yet must we think Herod was needlessly cruel in condemning these men to death? We shrink from believing that the Lord's plan for delivering Peter necessarily involved the destruction of the soldiers to whose custody he had been committed We prefer to think that a more thorough and searching investigation of the strange occurrence would have revealed to the king the presence and working of such occult and supernatural powers as might well lead him to pause in his mad rush upon Jehovah's buckler Such thorough examination he plainly did not institute, and, ruthlessly handing his faithful soldiers over to the judgment of death, he swept haughtily onward to his throne of power in Cæsarea, and to the awful catastrophe in which his throne went down before the vengeance of the Almighty

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Verses 18–19 Unmerited suffering the inscrutable and apparent cruelty of Providence Compare the beheading of John the Baptist,—Mark 6 27

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2 *The suppliant cities, and the pact of peace,—vs 20*

The haughty king was greatly incensed against the coast cities of Tyre and Sidon They were not in Herod's jurisdiction; and the exact cause of the royal displeasure is not stated by the historian. It is a plausible conjecture that Tyre and Sidon, having many advantages in age and situation, were working together to cripple if not destroy the commercial importance of the new seaport city, his favorite capital of Cæsarea It was a short-sighted policy on

the part of Tyre and Sidon, for, while they were commercial emporiums of great importance and power, they had but a strip of arable territory between them and the mountain ranges of Lebanon. It was true, then, as it is now, that the wealth of peoples came from the soil, and these wealthy cities were dependent upon the fertile lands of Canaan to the southeast And those lands were in the domain of Herod Agrippa.

It was of great importance therefore that their royal neighbor should be their friend, and that the two adjoining realms should be at peace So, taking occasion of the king's return to his capital, and having secured the friendship of the king's chamberlain, perhaps by some liberal bribe, they sought to make a treaty of peace, by removing the cause of the royal displeasure, and making it Herod's interest to lay aside his enmity Blastus, the master of the king's bed-chamber, had great influence with his sovereign, and through him the pact of peace was consummated

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Verses 20-21 The pacts of peace among men are likely to be of short duration if God be not a party to them

Vss. 20-25 An Old Picture of Human Society

I	National interdependence	III	Retributive justice
II	Class wickedness	IV	Remedial forces.

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3 *The brilliant assembly,—vs 21*

To celebrate the conclusion of this treaty a mighty concourse of people assembled in the theater,—the usual place of great popular gatherings Some writers think it was the festival of the Quinquennalia, observed in honor of Augustus Josephus says the occasion of the assembly was a great festival, extending over several days, and attended with gladiatorial combats and other games or shows, instituted by Herod to celebrate the return from Britain of his friend and patron, the emperor Claudius This may be true; and Luke's narrative dovetails into this wider history, relating the embassy of the suppliant cities upon one of the days of the great

festival, when the pageant had reached the culmination of its magnificence. The theater was probably in the open air, as was common in all semi-tropical cities. Josephus says the amphitheater was "in the south part of the city, and commanded a good view of the sea,"—i. e, the seats looked toward the west. (Josephus Ant. xv, 9, 6. See also Lewin's Life and Epistles of St Paul, Vol. 2, page 167, for a plan of Cæsarea) The stone circular seats rose tier on tier over the side of some hill or sand-dune, such as in our day separates the eastern line of Cæsarean ruins from the plain that stretches away to the hills of Galilee. We are warranted therefore in believing that the rostrum, or bema, was placed facing toward the east, while the multitudes were gathered, in front and around, in the majestic amphitheater

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4 *The ascription and usurpation of divine honors,—vs. 22*

It was a great occasion,—a great audience,—and, as Herod would have the people believe, a great sovereign stood before them He made an oration to the multitude We may be sure he was rigorously attentive to all the adjuncts of powerful and influential oratory Luke tells us that he arrayed himself in royal apparel From other sources we learn that his robe was of a burnished silver texture. And as the morning sun rose over the plain of Sharon on that first of August (for that was the date, and doubtless the assembly was early in the morning, before the coming on of the extreme heat) his radiant beams were reflected from the brilliant silver robe; and his majesty must have shone in an aureole of well-nigh ineffable splendor No doubt the praise-loving monarch had calculated the effect of it all; and he would, and he meant to, appear to the vast concourse of people as a being of more than mortal power and dignity. It is not unlikely, indeed, that he had privately arranged with some myrmidons of the palace to start the cry of sycophant adulation,—"The voice of a god, and not of a man!" The words were as sweet music to his ears. He had reached the highest goal of royal Roman ambition,—to be deified by the people He accepted the divine honors, and felicitated himself on being now really and truly a god!

5. *The stroke of death,—vs. 23.*

Then God smote him! The judgment of the Almighty fell upon Herod, not because the deification was thrust upon him, but because he accepted it—perhaps courted it, and gloried in it. "An angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory." The king was not an ignorant heathen. We are not, indeed, able to say how far he was informed on the themes of Israel's supernatural history, and the wonderful events which signalized the origin and propagation of the new faith. We know that his son and successor was "expert in all the customs and questions which prevailed among the Jews" (26.3), and was well advised of all things pertaining to the spread of Christianity, for "these things were not done in a corner" (26:26). And it seems hardly probable that the father was less informed than the son. He probably knew more than a pagan from Rome of the true religion, at least as it was exemplified in Judaism, and had heard of the glory of the great and dreadful God, who dwelt above the heavens, and whose glory He would not share with another That apotheosis in the Cæsarean theater was not on the part of the king an act of ignorance. He knew what it meant Nevertheless, a puny, pigmy, mortal man, he presumed to reach up and grasp the scepter of the Almighty, and take the worship and glory which belonged to Him alone!

It was an act of heaven-daring impiety, which merited the sudden and overwhelming stroke of Divine vengeance. And God smote him! His career is cut short! He dies, not as a hero on the field of battle, and confronting his foes in honorable conflict, but ignominiously and ingloriously! Not a god, but a worm of the dust, his horrible end is to be devoured by worms, who begin their ghoulish, ghastly feast before his agonizing spirit has left its mortal part, and his festering corpse has been put beneath the sod! So "O Lord, let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee!"

Verses 22–23 The doom of the incorrigible. In the spring Herod is in the full tide of aristocratic power; by midsummer he is rotting in a tyrant's sepulchre!

6. The growth of the Church,—vss. 24–25.

This section opens with a view of the capricious and haughty monarch sweeping proudly on to his throne of power, brushing from his way the unhappy guards, whom he had adjudged to death It closes with a vision of the Church of the Nazarene marching on to her world-wide conquest, indifferent to the fate of him who had afflicted her, but who now rotted in a dishonored sepulchre "The word of the Lord grew and multiplied" The royal cortège went down from Jerusalem to Cæsarea to witness the failure of all the proud words of the enemies of Christ The servants of the risen and glorified Nazarene went down from Jerusalem to Antioch, having accomplished in quietness their benign ministry, to see the word of God having free course and being glorified, and ready to be carried to the ends of the earth in fulfillment of the "Great Commission" Through all vicissitudes and experiences,—the fall of the faithful, and the opposition of its enemies,—the Cause of the Lord goes marching on!

DIVISION III

WITNESSES "UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH"

XIII 1—XXVIII 31

DIVISION III.

WITNESSES "UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH,"—XIII :1—XXVIII :31.

PART I—THE MISSIONARY JOURNEYS,—XIII 1—XXI 16

SECTION 1—THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL AND BARNABAS,—THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY,—13 1——14 28

SUB-SECTION 1—*The Missionary Commission,—vss 1-3*

1 Now there were at Antioch, in the Church that was there, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 And, as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them 3 Then when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away

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1 *The city,—Antioch* 2 *The men,—"Prophets and teachers"* 3 *Their ministry* 4 *Their summons and consecration to a new work*

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1 *The city,—Antioch,—vs 1.*

The city of Antioch was a fitting place from which to begin the missionary propaganda In apostolic times it was one of the three great capitals of the Roman Empire,—Rome and Alexandria being the only other cities that surpassed it in population and riches It had been founded more than three hundred years before by Seleucus Nicator on the banks of the Orontes, not far from the northeast corner of the Mediterranean and just south of the Gulf of Issus It was also on the great caravan route from the Orient to the Occident By land and sea, therefore, the riches of the world poured through the gates of the Syrian capital With a

cosmopolitan resident population of half a million, its streets were crowded with an immense multitude of visitors and temporary sojourners of all nations, races and occupations. As Renan, in Les Apôtres, vividly characterizes the varied throngs, "It was an unheard-of collection of jugglers, charlatans, pantomimists, magicians, thaumaturgists, sorcerers, and priestly impostors; a city of races, of games, of dances, of processions, of festivals, of bacchanalia, of unchecked luxury; all the extravagances of the east, the most unhealthy superstitions, the fanaticism of orgies In turns, servile and ungrateful, worthless and insolent, the Antiochenes were the finished model of those crowds devoted to Cæsarism, without country, without nationality, without family honor, without a name to preserve. The great Corso which traversed the city was like a theater, in which all day long rolled the waves of a population, empty, frivolous, fickle, turbulent, sometimes witty, absorbed in songs, parodies, pleasantries and impertinences of every description." These words of the brilliant Frenchman are quoted by Farrar, who also says, "Libanius could affirm, from personal experience, that he who sat in the agora of Antioch might study the customs of the world" In such a city the great enterprise of Foreign Missions was born.

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2. *The Men,—"Prophets and teachers,"—vs. 1.*

The prophets of the New Testament were, for the most part, evangelists of the Holy Gospel The word "prophet," in New Testament usage, does not always signify a foreteller of future events and there seems to be no valid reason for any pronounced differentiation between the prophet and the teacher of this passage, though the first may have been regarded as a somewhat higher office than the second. Five of these preachers and teachers of the Christian faith are mentioned in Luke's narrative. The fact that they alone are mentioned does not imply that they alone constituted the entire evangelizing force in Antioch. Rather are they named, we should suppose, as the chief leaders in the growing company of Gospel heralds. As men at the front they deserve attention and study. The first and last in Luke's list, Barnabas and Saul, have already come under our notice. (See pages 68 and 101.)

Of the other three we know little more than their names. All five seem to have been Jews, at least so we infer from their names. They were gathered together in Antioch from widely separated places in the Empire. Saul from Tarsus in Cilicia, Barnabas from Cyprus, and Lucius from Cyrene in North Africa, belonged to the Jews of the Dispersion. And, while we know nothing of the habitat of either Symeon or Manaen, we have reason to believe that both belonged to that section of Israel which naturally would have a broader outlook upon the world than their more provincial brethren. Niger was so called, not, probably, because he was a negro, but because of some close association with families in Rome, where the name was quite common And Manaen, whose name in Hebrew was Menahem, was foster-brother of Herod the Tetrarch, or, as the word may signify, "nourished at the same breast." This tetrarch, as would seem, was Herod Antipas and, since we learn from Josephus, "this Herod and his brother Archelaus were children of the same mother,—Malthace, a Samaritaness,—and afterwards educated together at Rome, it is probable that this Christian prophet or teacher had spent his early childhood with those two princes, who were now both banished from Palestine to the banks of the Rhone" Whether high-born or not, Manaen seems to have been brought up in the court of Herod the Great, and, like Moses in Egypt, was well educated, and could look beyond the narrow bounds of Palestine, and take far-reaching views in the history and development of the Church of God.

That five such men, of widest origin and broadest sympathies, should have come together just at this time is a suggestive illustration of the leadings of Divine Providence The Lord was preparing the way and the leaders of His people for a mighty advance in the conquest of the world.

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3. *Their ministry,—vs. 2a*

The historian's words are profoundly suggestive He plainly would have us understand that this "ministering to the Lord" was something quite distinct from the work of evangelization. By his use of the phrase he would emphasize the fact that the initial step in the foreign missionary propaganda began in prayer. This was

"the ministering to the Lord" which now absorbed the attention of the Antiochian believers: it was a ministry of "prayer and fasting" A little study of this ministry will not be unprofitable.

(1) It was united prayer It was something that the leaders of this Church, though brought from divers cities on two different continents, were bound together in one solemn purpose of prayer. But can we resist the conviction that the leaders here mentioned had a large and earnest following in the believing brotherhood? And have we not reason to believe that, as at Pentecost so here, the disciples were all assembled "together with one accord in one place."

(2) It was a pre-arranged season of supplication It seems to have been more than the regular and stated assembly of believers For some special and definite purpose it had been appointed that the brotherhood should come together for a time of united prayer The preaching of the word, for the time being, was put in the background, while the Church girded herself for a mighty struggle before the Mercy-Seat.

(3) It was a season of deeply solemn and earnest waiting on God. Fasting was not enjoined upon the New Testament Church, and when believers resorted to it, it indicated an unusually solemn occasion and a profoundly felt necessity So possessed were the souls of the Antioch Christians with the depth and urgency of the need, for which they were praying, that all desire for food and every temporal gratification and bodily pleasure lost their power over them, while they continued from day to day to urge their suit at the Throne of Grace For,

(4) It is evident that it was protracted prayer Not during one sitting of the assembly alone did they continue in prayer. Their fasting would certainly cover more than one day. and this prayer of the primitive Church was probably a prolonged and agonizing waiting on God, in which believers would take pattern after, and courage from, the Pentecostal experience of the earlier day

This was the ministry in Antioch of which Luke speaks. What did it mean? What so stirred the souls of the Antioch Christians? We are not told Is it difficult to conjecture? The Church was planted in the midst of a great heathen city She had had a wonderful career of triumph, but there is abundant reason to believe that multitudes were yet unevangelized And, besides the natives

and residents of the city, its streets and boulevards, and especially its gigantic Corso and infamous Grove of Daphne, were thronged by vast multitudes of visitors,—myriads on myriads,—from every race and nation under heaven, lovers of money and lovers of pleasure in countless thousands. As believers encountered and observed these thronging multitudes, their hearts could not but have been moved with compassion upon them. And were they not certain to look beyond these tired faces, whom they saw with bodily eyes, to the innumerable company which, in vision, stretched out from this pagan city over the nations to the end of the world? And could they fail to reason,—"Who shall save these perishing nations? The Gospel came to us, should it not also go to them? Our brethren brought us the good news; ought we not to carry it to the people beyond, who still sit in darkness and in the region and shadow of death?"

And, as they reasoned and questioned, day by day the problem pressed for solution, till at last the burden became too heavy for them, and of necessity they must bring it to lay before their Divine Lord "He had said to His disciples, Go ye and make disciples of all nations Did He mean us? Would He have us go? Let us ask counsel of the Lord" It is all but absolutely certain that this is the correct explanation of these days of fasting and prayer in the Church of Antioch This was the end of "the ministering to the Lord" to which they had given themselves

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4 *Their summons and consecration to a new work,—vss. 2b–3.*

While they waited on the Lord, the Spirit's message came,—"Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." This Divine answer to their supplications may not have been what they expected They were not told what specific work was appointed to the designated witnesses. The Holy Spirit was doing more than simply inaugurating the work of Foreign Missions He was Himself taking the great enterprise in hand: and Himself proposed to lead forth the Gospel Heralds in their evangelistic tours

It was a trial of the faith of these praying Christians that they were at once summoned to give up, if not their best, certainly

their most prominent, men to an unknown work. And doubtless there were some in Antioch whose first thought was to wonder at, if not question, the wisdom of sending away their ablest and most efficient workers, while there was so much work yet to be done in evangelizing the great city where they were assembled together. Yet in this the Lord was working like Himself. When our hearts are truly and earnestly set on the evangelization of the world, we may expect the Lord's summons to surrender our best beloved to the great cause

It is to the honor of the noble Church of Antioch that they promptly responded to the call for their best in an unknown enterprise Without hesitation or murmur, with fasting and prayer, they laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul, ordaining them to the high and holy cause of missions to all heathen peoples; and so "sent them away" It is worth while to think how much is comprehended in this expression. While primitive missions were, in a measure, self-supporting, we can hardly doubt that the Church at Antioch shared with Barnabas and Saul the cost of their outfit and travel In later days the Christian communities established by the missionaries cared for the itinerating evangelists, because, as John says (iii Jno 7), "For the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles" But in the outstart the heralds of the cross had but two sources of support,—the gifts of their brethren, and the labor of their own hands And SO "they sent them away"

Verse 2 Prayer and Missions are ever indissolubly bound together — Vs 2b God wants our best for the foreign work The unfinished work at home is no excuse for neglecting the work abroad

Vss 1-3 A MISSIONARY CHURCH.

I Awake to her opportunities
II Truly concerned for the heathen
III Going to the only Source of wisdom
IV Ready to give her best for the service
V Cooperating with the Holy Spirit
VI Following providential leadings

Vs 2 Planning a Campaign

I Getting ourselves right should be the first burden of all earnest workers
II Our minds must take in the special needs of those outside and around us
III The Holy Spirit must have an important place in our enlarging schemes
IV Unexpected sacrifices will be required of us as we seek the enlargement of the Kingdom

Sub-section 2—*In Cyprus,—vss. 4-12*

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus

5 And when they were at Salamis they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews, and they had also John as their attendant.

6 And when they had gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus; 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding The same called unto him Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God 8 But Elymas, the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation), withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith 9 But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him, 10 and said, O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand 12 Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord

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1 *Going to Cyprus,—vs 4* 2 *Incidents in Cyprus,—vss 5-12,—*(1) *Preaching in Salamis—vs 5,—*(2) *Preaching at Paphos,—vs 7;—*(3) *The proconsul and Saul's new name,—vss 8-9,—*(4) *Elymas, the sorcerer,—vss 9-12*

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1. *Going to Cyprus,—vs. 4.*

The thoughtful student of Luke's narrative can hardly resist the inquiry, Why did these first Foreign Missionaries go to Cyprus? The historian says, indeed, that they were sent forth not only by the Church, but also by the Holy Spirit. But it may admit of

question whether under the circumstances this means anything more than that they were divinely guided in the exercise of their own best judgment as to how and where they should begin the fulfilment of their missionary commission. Paul and his companions, at a later date, were sent from Asia over into Europe through the vision of the man of Macedonia; but the history gives us no other instance, except those of that second missionary journey, of the manifest intervention of the Divine Hand guiding the itinerating evangelists to their fields of labor They were left, for the most part, to providential circumstances and leadings in their going hither and thither. If it was so in this instance, why did Barnabas and Saul choose to go to the Island of Cyprus?

And the question merges into another and larger inquiry,—Why went these heralds of the great Evangel to the west rather than to the east? And while we wonder and ponder the question we cannot answer, more clearly in vision we see the Divine and Gracious Head of His Church not merely "Standing now within the shadow, keeping watch above His own," but actively directing the evangelizing forces, as they march to the redemption of the world by way of the Occident rather than the Orient We sometimes wonder what would have been the result if the mightiest forces of the missionary propaganda had gone first eastward to India, China and Japan, reaching our own country by way of the Pacific, while we were made light-bearers to the European world But we feel sure a Divine Hand guided the saving movement in a better way The world is thus ever "rolling into the light," and while the poet sings,

"Westward the course of empire takes its way,"

we are certain that the throne follows the cross, and the stablest earthly empires grow in the light of the Holy Evangel

Recurring to the more specific question, Why went the apostles to Cyprus, and recalling our conviction that their movements were not in this instance determined by any voice directly from the skies, a number of considerations throw light on the question. They might have reached the ultimate destination of this first missionary journey in a much shorter way by crossing the Taurian Mountains on the caravan road from Antioch to the Ægean Sea. Saul had visited this region of "Syria and Cilicia" before, and he did so again in his second missionary journey. Why not go this

way now? It is a plausible conjecture that, just at this time, as often before and perhaps later, the great highway had been rendered unsafe by numerous bands of highway robbers, who, while they would not dare to attack a large caravan, would make short work with a small and unarmed company; and a caravan may not have been just then available.

The sea was safer. And especially so was it at this time, for Pompey had recently cleared the entire Mediterranean of the pirates and corsairs who had long preyed upon the commerce of those historic waters. It was natural, therefore, for the missionaries to follow the ordinary and safe lines of commercial travel. And so they "went down to Seleucia, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus"

It is another consideration that Cyprus was the home of Barnabas· and he seems to have been a man of some wealth and prominence, though we are left in doubt whether his property was in Cyprus or Jerusalem We cannot say, indeed, that the fact that the island was the home of Barnabas was a determining factor in their thus going forth, because the same consideration might have led the missionaries to Tarsus, which was Saul's native city. But there were many Jews in Cyprus; and this may have been the chief reason why they made their way thither first of all, for, while they were ordained to the work of Foreign Missions, they were ever mindful to carry the good news first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles

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Verse 2 How the Church best sends forth her laborers—Vs 4 The sending forth by a praying Church in obedience to a Divine command is a sending forth by the Holy Spirit—Vs 4b The Master expects us to use our common sense, and follow providential leadings, in choosing our fields of labor

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2 *Incidents in Cyprus,—vss. 5-12.*

A sail of one hundred miles to the southwest brought the apostles to the scenes of their first evangelistic labors. These began with,

(1) *The preaching in Salamis* This city, one of large size,

lying on the southeast coast of the island, was, in apostolic times, the capital city of Cyprus, and a commercial emporium of no little importance It was also the home of a large number of Jews They had here a number of synagogues It is not unlikely that this was the native-place of Barnabas, and possibly of John Mark, now an attendant on Barnabas and Saul We wonder, too, if it may not have been the home of Mnason, an early and wealthy disciple, who had a house also in Jerusalem, and with whom Paul and his companions were to lodge, during his final visit to the Holy City. The Gospel had won some of its earliest triumphs in Cyprus, perhaps in Salamis, and we cannot forget that men of Cyprus, as well as of Cyrene, were the first to preach the Gospel in Antioch They had freely given, it was but fair that they should freely receive· and so the first ordained Foreign Missionaries preached the word of God first of all in the synagogues of Salamis to their own kindred of the Jewish race, and possibly to their nearer kinsfolk and relatives.

How long they remained in Salamis, and what success attended their ministry, we are not told It seems probable that their stay was short The seed of the Gospel had been already planted in Salamis; and, as these evangelists did not wish to build on other men's foundations (for so the apostle had determined), they probably hurried on over the one hundred miles through the whole island. Taking advantage of the excellent military road, which, as was her custom all over the Empire, Rome had built, connecting the two principal seaports of the island, they soon came down to Paphos, lying on the southwest coast.

(2) *The preaching at Paphos* In this proconsular city of Cyprus the witnesses for the Nazarene confronted entirely different problems from those they had met at Salamis Their message there was chiefly to the Jews, here they were in a heathen city And their work here was eminently the work of foreign missions Paphos was the center and home of the licentious worship of Venus Anadyomene, or Aphrodite,—the goddess fabled to have been born of the sea. "One of the Homeridæ sings that the moist-blowing west wind wafted her in soft foam along the waves of the sea, and that the gold-filleted Seasons received her on the shores of Cyprus, clothed her in immortal garments, placed a golden wreath on her head, rings of orichalcum and gold in her pierced ears, and golden

chains about her neck; and then led her to the assembly of the immortals, every one of whom admired, saluted, and loved her; and each god desired her for his spouse"—(Anthon.)

The new Paphos, which Barnabas and Saul visited, was about ten miles from the old town and original home of these idolatrous rites; but even in their day the road between the two places was often filled with gay and profligate processions, and strangers from distant places visited and worshipped at this lascivious shrine. How much Barnabas and Saul came in contact with this vile heathenism Luke does not say His narrative dwells upon another episode in the experiences of the travelers.

(3) *The proconsul, and Saul's new name* Sergius Paulus was a Roman officer apparently of a superior class, not only in official station but also in character Luke says he was "a man of understanding" Just what this means is not clear It seems to imply that, though he was surrounded by the devotees of an impure worship, his mind was set on higher things The problems of life and destiny in all probability engaged his attention first of all. And this explains the presence in his proconsular court of the sorcerer Bar-Jesus, or, as he probably styled himself, "Elymas the Magian" Having no knowledge of the true God, and in total blindness as to the way of life, and without hope or belief in a future state, like many wise men of his generation, Sergius Paulus turned even to magicians and soothsayers for light and comfort as he looked upon the sorrows of life and the gloom of the grave

He was groping for the light; and, when he heard of the missionaries, and some rumor of the tidings they brought, he sent for them, if perchance he might hear something which should satisfy the cravings of his higher nature He "sought to hear the word of God" He heard,—accepted the truth,—believed,—and was saved by the Messiah-Saviour, whom Barnabas and Saul proclaimed.

It was a great triumph for the missionaries of the Cross And Saul, who seemed to be chiefly instrumental in the attainment of this victory in the conversion of Sergius Paulus, was henceforth called Paul, as would seem, in commemoration of this remarkable event. There are, indeed, other explanations of this new name of the apostle to the Gentiles, but none seems to be as satisfying as this one. It must be remembered that here in Paphos, for the first time, the apostles are permitted to preach the glad tidings to a

heathen man of high character, prominent in official station, and an honored officer of the Roman army,—that Saul was here, as later at Lystra, the "chief speaker,"—and that so cogent was his reasoning and persuasive his presentation of the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, that the governor of a Roman province was led to accept the Divine Saviour whom Paul preached It was eminently fitting that the apostle should commemorate such a victory, pledge of mightier ones to come, by assuming a new name. What more appropriate name than that of the Roman Proconsul? Paulus means little; and by assuming it the apostle would remind himself perpetually of his personal insignificance, while the event commemorated would ever encourage him to believe that, in the vast and difficult work of evangelizing the Empire, his gracious Master could and would make powerful and efficient use of the feeblest instrumentalities So Paul is to be his name henceforward And, from this time forth, he steps to the front as the leader of the missionary deputation Heretofore it had been "Barnabas and Saul," hence-onward it shall be "Paul and Barnabas"

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4 *Elymas, the Sorcerer,—vss 9–12*

The victory at Paphos was not won without a battle Bar-Jesus, the sorcerer, withstood the missionaries, and "sought to turn aside the proconsul from the faith" He saw at once that all his lying pretensions, and divinations, and sham insight of the future would go down in ignominious wreck before the forces of truth. And so he set himself in opposition to the evangelists, and sought to destroy their benign work in its very incipiency He did not, like Simon Magus, at first hypocritically accept the new teaching; but from the very beginning he assumed an attitude of uncompromising hostility

But he soon found himself fighting not alone against the humble missionaries from Antioch, but the mighty God of their fathers, and His risen and exalted Son Jesus Christ Elymas the Magian, like Simon the Magian, may not have known anything of Christ; but the one, as truly as the other, knew that he was a fraud, and that he was trading on the superstitions of the people, and even

making havoc of the most earnest upreachings of benighted souls. And both deserved the severity with which they were handled by the servants of God The words of the apostle to the sorcerer of Paphos were terrific,—the withering and scorching denunciation of a righteous indignation. and the judgment of God was condign and instantaneous, though tempered with mercy in that his punishment was but for a season. Most powerfully does Raphael's cartoon portray the proud adversary, so suddenly and terribly stricken, in his blindness groping through the mist and darkness, as he "went about seeking some to lead him by the hand."

"Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed,"—his faith confirmed by this miraculous attestation of the mission of the Gospel messengers,—and, more than ever, was "astonished a' the teaching of the Lord"

Verse 5 Our kindred have a special claim on us for the Gospel "Go home to thy friends, etc," the Lord said to one whom He had healed—Vs 5b God's ancient people were to have the first offer of the Gospel—Vs 7 Sergius Paulus was "a man of understanding" Blessed they who look beneath the lies and shams of a deceitful world—Vs 8 Renegades and apostates are the worst enemies of the Gospel The sin of turning inquirers from the faith Jeroboam is pilloried by the Divine Spirit in eternal infamy, because he not only sinned, but also "made Israel to sin"—Vs 9. Commemorating victories by change of name,—Jacob-Israel,—Saul-Paul It was Paulus, not Magnus, that caught the apostle's notice—Vs 10 Righteous wrath and terrific words are sometimes justly used in dealing with high-handed evil-doers—Vs 12 A miracle may be fitted to arrest attention, but a true convert is more likely to be amazed by the doctrines of the Gospel He will be glad to sing the wonders of redeeming love!

Vss 6-12 The Conversion of Sergius

I. The history, character and position of the man
II His deeper longings
III The work of the Word with him—(*Gerberding, Rev G H*)

Sub-section 3—*At Antioch in Pisidia,—vss 13-52*

13 Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem 14 But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia; and

they went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and sat down 15 And, after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on

The History

16 And Paul stood up, and, beckoning with the hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, hearken · 17 The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they sojourned in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm led He them forth out of it 18 And for about the time of forty years as a nursing father bare He them in the wilderness 19 And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He gave them their land for an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years 20 and after these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet 21 And afterward they asked for a king and God gave unto them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for the space of forty years 22 And when He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, to whom also He bare witness and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall do all my will

The Argument

23 Of this man's seed hath God according to promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus, 24 when John had first preached before His coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel 25 And, as John was fulfilling his course, he said, What suppose ye that I am? I am not He But behold, there cometh one after me the shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to unloose 26 Brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and those among you that fear God, to us is the word of this salvation sent forth 27 For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning Him 28 And, though they found no cause of death in Him, yet asked they Pilate that He should be slain 29 And when they had fulfilled all things that were written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a tomb 30 But God raised Him from the dead 31 and He was seen for many days of them that came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now His witnesses to the people 32 And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers, 33 that God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that He raised up Jesus, as also it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee 34 And, as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He hath spoken on this wise, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David 35 Because He hath said also in another psalm, Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption 36 For David, after he had in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell asleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption 37 but He whom God raised up saw no corruption 38 Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins.

39 and by Him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses 40 Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets: 41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish, for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe if one declare it unto you

The Result.

42 And, as they went out, they besought that these words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath 43 Now, when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God 44 And the next Sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God 45 But, when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed 46 And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set Thee for a light to the Gentiles, and that Thou shouldst be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth 48 And, as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed 49 And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region 50 But the Jews urged on the devout women of honorable estate, and the chief men of the city, and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and cast them out of their borders 51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit

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1 *The journey to Pisidian Antioch,—vss 13–14* 2 *Paul's sermon in the synagogue,—vss 16–41,—(1) The History,—16–22;—(2) The Argument,—23–41* 3 *The effect of the sermon,—vss 42–52*

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1 *The journey to Pisidian Antioch,—vss. 13–14.*

From the island of Cyprus the missionaries returned to continental shore. To the question why they went from Paphos to Perga, the obvious answer is, They were following the usual lines of commercial travel. The trade of the Mediterranean was largely a coastwise commerce. but no interchange of commodities could leave out the important island of Cyprus; and so sailing vessels

were frequently passing from shore to island, and from island to shore. By one of these the apostles came to Pamphylia. Why Paul and Barnabas hastened away from this maritime province, and from the seacoast cities of Perga, Attalia and others, seems at first thought inexplicable It is happily conjectured that the missionaries reached Pamphylia in the late spring or early summer. This is highly probable if they began their missionary journey with the opening of navigation after the winter was over and gone And, if so, they would find the people, following a custom still in vogue along this semi-tropical coast, leaving their hot and uncomfortable homes for a summer sojourn among the mountains and elevated regions between Pisidia and Phrygia So, accompanying the people, and evangelizing as they went, the heralds of the King would come out at last upon the elevated tablelands of Pisidia, and soon find their way to Antioch.

This Antioch was the central city of this part of Asia Minor More military roads diverged from this center to all points of the compass than from any other city of the Orient. It was also on the great central route from east to west along which passed the numerous and richly laden caravans of commerce. If here, as in Corinth at a later day, Paul was obliged to support himself by the labor of his own hands, he could not have chosen any better place for working at his trade. Tent-making would be in demand, and Paul and Barnabas could here support themselves through the week, and on the sabbath day preach the Gospel So they came to Antioch, and in due time found their way to the House of God

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Verse 13 On John's return to Jerusalem see The Contention, 15 36-40, page 243 The evangelization of the world must go forward, even if some, from whatever motive, turn back—Vs 14 Opportunities for service will come to those who put themselves in the way of them—Vs 14 Strangers in the city will find friends in the House of God

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2 *Paul's sermon in the synagogue,—vss. 16-41.*

Luke's brief narrative paints for us a very charming picture of this scene. On some Saturday,—a memorable summer day,—two strangers are found seated in the synagogue of the Dispersion in

this provincial capital. There was something about the men that arrested attention. The great-minded, and perhaps great-bodied, Barnabas, and Paulus the little, would be men of mark in any assembly Perhaps they were known to be men employed in some tent-making factory, who had knocked off work on the seventh day that they might worship the God of their fathers in the synagogue of their unknown brethren. And now they are seated among them, men of dignified mien, grave and reverent in demeanor, listening to the reading of the law and the prophets. Such men must have a message worth hearing, is the thought of the rulers, let us attend to them And with this hope in mind the officers of the congregation invited them to speak.

Then Paul stood up, and, beckoning with the hand to bespeak their silent attention, addressed his racial kindred in terms of exquisite courtesy and profound respect,—"Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, hearken."

An analysis of the sermon that follows,—the first one of Paul's of which the historian gives us anything like a full summary,—discloses the fact that in the main it consists of a historical introduction and an expository argument.

(1) *The History* This part of the address, embracing but six verses (17-22), is quite brief: and in it Paul is thought to have taken pattern after Stephen's great apology before the Sanhedrin, which probably Paul heard as a young member of that Supreme Court of his people. A close examination, however, will show that Paul was no mere copyist of the proto-martyr, and that there is really little that is common to these first parts of the two great sermons. In two points alone the one resembles the other:—both rehearse a supernatural history; and both speakers have the same object in view,—Stephen to conciliate his judges, if that were possible, and Paul to win the favorable attention of his brethren to his testimony for Jesus of Nazareth Stephen begins with the call of Abraham, and Paul with the Exodus from Egypt The proto-martyr's rehearsal reaches across the centuries to Solomon: Paul's briefer story stops with David, the shepherd-king, and man "after God's own heart," whose promised seed was the Saviour-Jesus, the Nazarene.

The story was one which the Jews of the Dispersion would hear with as earnest and profound attention as the prejudiced Court in

Jerusalem. And now, while they are marveling at the wonderful history, and admiring the stranger's charming rehearsal, the apostle with admirable rhetorical skill brings before them his testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth

(2) *The Argument.* In this part of his address Paul emphasizes two noble and pregnant lines of thought. Luke gives them in a subsequent paragraph, as a summary of the apostle's address at Thessalonica, where he says (17 2–3), "Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ" These two thoughts evidently formed the staple of Paul's preaching everywhere in the synagogues, and what he said in exposition of them Luke here records somewhat in detail, because it was probably the apostle's first great sermon in his missionary journeys.

The two important lines of thought were these, viz —(a) The Messiah whom they had been promised, according to their own Scriptures, was to be a suffering Messiah,—and (2) Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled all the conditions of the prophetic records, and had an irrefutable claim to be regarded and honored as that Messiah These two points Paul elaborates with great clearness and cogency in this address to the children of the Dispersion

This is the course of his argument, viz —(a) The promise made to the fathers was the promise of a Saviour, and not merely that of a national ruler (vs 23) (b) This Saviour had been pre-announced and heralded by John the Baptist (vss 24–25) (c) This Saviour had not been recognized by their rulers in Jerusalem; and, because of their blindness, and ignorance of their own Scriptures, they had crucified and slain Him (vss. 27–29). (d) But God had raised Him from the dead, and He had been seen during many days by His Galilean followers, who had gone up with Him on that memorable journey to the Cross (vs. 31). (e) These, Paul assures his brethren, were the "glad tidings," and the fulfilment of the ages-old promise; and this is certified to us both by the living witnesses, and by their own Sacred Writings.

The Scriptures, which Paul quotes in vss. 33–37, are conclusive as to his first point,—that the Christ was to suffer and to die His second point,—that Jesus of Nazareth was that Messiah, the

Christ,—depends absolutely upon the testimony of the witnesses of the resurrection. For, if He rose from the dead, then was He indeed the promised Messiah and the Divine Saviour. As Paul afterwards wrote to the Romans, so he teaches here, the Lord Christ "was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." And this resurrection is certified to us by the chosen and irrefutable witnesses

On the basis of this testimony the apostle, in closing, dwells upon the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel (vss 38-39); and ends his wonderful sermon with an earnest and affectionate warning of awful solemnity, coming as the preternatural voice of authority and power out of the very depths of those Scriptures in which they themselves professed to believe (Vss. 40-41)

Verse 16 God will send tidings of salvation to those who reverently wait on Him —Vs 17 It is good to be reminded of our low estate, and of the years of the right hand of the Most High —Vs 18 God is the "nursing father" to His people —Vss 24-25 God is ever mindful of His promise· The mission of the Forerunner —Vs 27 Blindness to the meaning of Scripture is a fearful judgment from God —Vs 28 God uses the wicked acts of sinful men to accomplish His holy purposes —Vs 33 The fullness of Old Testament Scripture in the light of New Testament exposition —Vss 38-39 Remission of sins and complete justification come to us through the crucified and risen Redeemer —Vs 40 Tender warnings properly follow a full and free offer of the great salvation.

Vss. 17-21 Paul's Epitome of Israel's History

I The deliverance from bondage
II The guidance through the wilderness
III The help in the conquest of Canaan
IV. The mercy and wrath through the judges
V The establishment of the monarchy.

Vs 22 A Man After God's Own Heart

I Faithful in the general tenor of his way.
II May under temptation grievously sin
III Will sincerely repent and turn to God
IV. Will ever sing Jehovah's praise

Vs 26 THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL

I It is the word of salvation
II It is, first of all, for the children of the covenant

VSS. 28-31. PAUL'S SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL

I Jesus of Nazareth adjudged to death
II He was crucified, dead, and buried
III His resurrection from the dead
IV Attested by many competent witnesses

Vs 36 THE RIGHT KIND OF A LIFE

I It is a life of service
II It is a service of our own generation
III It is a service in accordance with the will of God
IV It is a service followed by rest

Vs. 38 THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN

I It is forgiveness by God
II It is forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ
III. It is forgiveness realized by the believer
IV. It is forgiveness exemplified by the Christian —(*The Homilist*)

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3. *The effect of the sermon,—vss. 42-52*

As at Pentecost (2 43-47), a series of great things made those weeks in Antioch ever memorable (1) There were "great searchings of hearts," and the congregation was divided into two parties. (2) There was great hungering for the word of life on the part of believers (3) There was great interest in the tidings brought by Paul and Barnabas (4) There was great opposition on the part of the unbelieving Jews (5) Great boldness of spirit characterized the missionaries (6) A great triumph of the truth in Antioch, and the region round about, was a natural result. (7) A great persecution immediately followed (8) And through it all great joy in the Lord pervaded the hearts of the brotherhood of believers.

Verse 42 Saving hearing of the Gospel begets an insatiable hunger and thirst for the Gospel And what we so long for ourselves we will desire other people to share —Vs 44. When God's people are full of blessing the world will crowd to share the glad tidings —Vs 45 The spirit of envy and jealousy is a Satanic spirit, it will neither accept the Gospel itself, nor suffer others to do so —Vs 46 If one fails of salvation, it will not be because it was not sincerely offered to him, but because he "judged himself unworthy of eternal life"—Vss 46-47 This was apparently the apostle's first formal proclamation of his commission to the Gentiles —Vs 48 The Gospel fits the facts Some disbelieve, they judge themselves unworthy of eternal life: others believe and accept the glad tidings, mercy to them is from everlasting to everlasting. The Scripture method of stating the truth does not alter the facts They who disbelieve have no one to blame but themselves, they who believe cannot justly claim any credit for their salvation —Vs 49 The sincere acceptance of the Gospel leads to earnest efforts to spread it far and wide —Vs 50 The enlistment of women in an evil cause is a master-stroke of the Evil One —Vs 51 The departure of a rejected messenger of Jesus Christ is full of an infinite sadness —Vs 52 There is a vital connection between the fullness of the Spirit and the fullness of joy

Vs 36 USEFUL LIVING AND HAPPY DYING

I Useful living
  1 The object of the service
  2 The method of the service
II Happy dying
  1 A useful life does not exempt us from death
  2 A useful life modifies the character of death —(*The Homilist*)

Vs 38 THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

I A real experience
II A personal experience
III A reconciling experience
IV A fruitful experience
V A repeated experience
VI At the foot of the Cross —(*Clow, Rev W M*)

Vss 38-39 DIVINE FORGIVENESS

I The great want of humanity
II Supplied through Jesus Christ
III In connection with true faith.
IV To the greatest sinners —(*The Homilist*)

Vs 46 PHASES OF THE GOSPEL

I Offered by a Divine Plan
II Rejected by an unbelieving people
III Promoted by earnest men—(*The Homilist*)

Vss 46-48 THE GENTILES RECEIVE THE GOSPEL

I The necessity to which Paul was reduced
II The authority under which he acted
III The success he obtained—*Simeon* (*Horæ Homileticæ*)

Vs 52 SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE.

I The text records an experience, spiritual, real, and exemplary
II The degree and measure of this experience deserve consideration
III The attainment of like experience can never be deemed impossible (*The Homilist*)

SUB-SECTION 4.—*At Iconium,—14 1-7*

1 And it came to pass in Iconium that they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude, both of Jews and of Greeks, believed

2 But the Jews that were disobedient stirred up the souls of the Gentiles, and made them evil affected against the brethren

3 Long time, therefore, they tarried there, speaking boldly in the Lord, who bare witness unto the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands 4 But the multitude of the city was divided, and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles

5 And when there was made an onset, both of the Gentiles and of the Jews with their rulers, to treat them shamefully and to stone them, 6 they became aware of it, and fled unto the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the region round about 7 and there they preached the Gospel

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1 *Fruitful preaching,—vs 1* 2 *Growing opposition,—vs 2* 3 *The alignment of forces,—vss 3-4* 4 *The escape from the storm,—vss 5-7*

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1 *Fruitful preaching,—vs. 1*

Rejected by Antioch, Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium They reached this city by a journey to the southeast of sixty miles Their way probably led them along near the base of the Paroreian range of mountains, and across a bleak and comparatively desolate plain

to "the green oasis on which stands the city of Iconium," known on our modern maps as Koniyeh. In the later history the city became famous as the seat of the last of the four Suljukian Sultanates of the Mohammedan power, and the place where the Ottoman Empire had its origin. Some legends of the apostolic age are also connected with Iconium Notably the story of Thekla, the maiden friend of Paul, is associated with this city, which was the place of her birth. The story is very ancient, and, while much of it is no doubt apocryphal, there may be a substratum of truth in it Thekla, converted here in Iconium, may have subsequently come to be one of the women who, like Euodia and Synteche, "labored with Paul in the Gospel"

But to Paul and Barnabas the city had no historic associations; and their chief interest and concern were with their fellow-countrymen, and the synagogue in which they worshipped Thither they found their way, and here, in Luke's expressive language, they "so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed" Another illustration of the widespread preparation which Divine Providence had made for the missionary propaganda, the evangelists found here not only a synagogue in which to proclaim the glad tidings, but also a people, who, with uplifted eyes, were looking for the light, and in the darkness were groping after God

But Luke's words seem to imply that there was something in the apostles' spirit, or manner, or method, specially fitted to inform, persuade and move these seekers after God; and the result was the conversion of a large number What it was that gave the message such unwonted power Luke does not say A deeper sense of their need on the part of those who heard, and a profounder conception of the truth,—a clearer statement of the only and gracious way,—a mightier infilling of the Spirit,—and a tender, yearning and persuasive pleading with men to forsake their sins and turn to God, through faith in the risen Christ;—these must have been some of the elements of power in the missionaries' presentation of the Gospel And therefore many were persuaded to believe.

Verse 1 The house of worship in its relations to the preaching of the Gospel—Vs 1 The Gospel is a message to people of all nations and races —Vs. 1 Much preaching is not followed by believing· why?

Vs 1 Preaching and Believing

I Preaching must have to do with fundamental truth
II It must be accompanied by earnest and believing prayer
III It must be with authority,—faithful and persuasive
IV. It must press for an immediate decision for Christ

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2. Growing opposition,—vs 2.

As at Antioch, the people of Iconium soon divided into two parties. Some believed the Gospel, accepted Jesus of Nazareth as their Divine and risen Redeemer, and allied themselves with His chosen witnesses Others rejected their testimony, and set themselves in opposition to the truth The leaders of this party were unbelieving and disobedient Jews, who stirred up even the Gentiles, "and made them evil affected against the brethren" The ground of this opposition to the Gospel on the part of the Jews is not far to seek It was probably manifested in a denial of the two great topics of the evangelists' preaching They would not consent to Paul's interpretation of their Scriptures of the Old Testament, which found in them the revelation of a "suffering Messiah," nor would they accept the testimony that Jesus of Nazareth was that "suffering Messiah." We can easily understand the strength of this position of the unbelieving Jewish leaders with their own countrymen.

But what hold had they upon their Gentile neighbors? How could they stir up their souls against the messengers of life? The answer to these questions at first sight is not clear A little further reflection will perhaps lead us to believe that the difficulty with the unbelieving Gentiles would be "the intolerance of the Gospel" The heralds of the Cross proclaimed a full and free salvation through Jesus of Nazareth, and summoned the people to repentance and faith in Him. But by the terms of their commission they were obliged to say also, There is no other way, "Neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" With the Gentiles, therefore, the acceptance of the overtures of the herald-messengers required the abandonment of idolatry, and their turning from "these vain things unto a

living God." So the apostles taught soon after at Lystra; and doubtless this was an essential part of their preaching in Iconium The disobedient Jews, wily and subtle in their wisdom, could make a great deal out of this, and the result is seen in a growing opposition, following rapidly on the heels of the success of the Gospel among such a large multitude.

Verse 2 A faithful ministry will excite opposition—Vs 2 Rejecters of the Gospel like to have company, and will often seek to hinder others from accepting Christ

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3 *The alignment of forces,—vss. 3-4*

"The multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles" The result was neither strange nor new The Lord Himself had predicted just such divisions He said to His disciples, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth, I came not to send peace, but a sword For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt 10:34-36) The Gospel is a positive force, its influence is never of a negative character The faithful preaching of the truth will always and everywhere make friends or enemies It was so in Iconium.

The missionaries, however, did not regard this as a reason for abandoning the field On the contrary, according to Luke's suggestive "therefore," the prevalence of these divisions brought the apostles to a directly opposite determination. As Paul, in the later history, decided to continue preaching at Ephesus, not only because "a great door and effectual had been opened to him," but also because "there were many adversaries," so here, he and Barnabas resolved to prolong their labors just because the forces of opposition were being arrayed against them Through the machinations of their foes many were becoming "evil affected" against them; "long time, therefore, they tarried there speaking boldly in the Lord."

In some respects the contrast between the ministry at Antioch and this at Iconium is notable. At Antioch the apostles did not

remain to fight. When the Jews used "the chief men of the city" and "the devout women of honorable estate" to stir up a persecution of the evangelists, they quietly shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came to Iconium. We can hardly believe that Paul and Barnabas fled because the women got after them, but they certainly retired before the first show of opposition and fled to another province. But in Iconium, though they were aware of the growing disaffection, they tarried a long while, and gave themselves with increasing courage to the preaching of the "glad tidings." This faith of the messengers triumphing in the Lord, and their persistent determination to win a victory for the Gospel, met the Divine approval; and in a way not conspicuous at Antioch the Lord bare witness to the word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands

There were no miracles at Antioch, so far as we know; while the ministry at Iconium was buttressed with supernatural powers Why the difference? The question is not easy to answer This much we can say —The opposition at Antioch was less pronounced and violent than at Iconium, and, as is the Lord's wont, "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him" Because of the turbulence of the foe the Lord made bare His arm in signs and wonders We have seen Philip the Deacon doing more miracles in Samaria apparently than any one of the apostles in Jerusalem, because of the heaven-daring impiety of Simon the Sorcerer And here in Iconium, because their enemies were so zealous and mighty, the Lord put mightier weapons in the hands of His servants But among a people so mightily moved to do right, yet free and stirred up to do evil, it seemed in the end of little avail.

Verse 3 Opposition should increase our zeal When that opposition becomes extraordinarily virulent the Lord will gird His people with extraordinary powers

Vs. 4 The Gospel a Divisive Element in Human Society

I The ultimate aim of the Gospel is indeed peace
II It gives new tastes to those who accept it
III. It sets forth higher aims in life to all who believe
IV Its rewards, both present and future, are chiefly spiritual

4. *The escape from the storm,—vss. 5-7.*

That storm, long impending, was about to break with disastrous power. That it did not actually burst upon the devoted heads of the missionaries was not due to any forbearance on the part of their enemies, but to their own wise and prudent conduct. Paul and Barnabas foresaw the approaching crisis, and knew the war of words would soon give place to deeds of violence They believed the time had now come when they would be warranted in literal obedience of their Lord's command,—"When they persecute you in this city flee into the next" And so they withdrew from Iconium.

It is difficult to understand the widespreading prevalence of the spirit of violence, which seems to have pervaded all classes of the community. Both Gentiles and Jews and the rulers were animated by one common spirit of malevolence and determined lawlessness Considering the nature and violence of this persecution, it is to the credit of the women of Iconium that they were not involved in it, as the women of Antioch were in the outbreak in that city. The word Luke uses is a very strong one, and betokens intended acts of vile and personal physical indignity, of such heinous and shameful character as by Athenian law were punishable with death To these humiliating indignities the rancorous multitudes determined to subject the messengers of peace, and only after they had so endured were they to receive the merciful release of death by stoning! No wonder the apostles fled from such unbridled fury!

One other feature of this dastardly outrage presents a problem, and the solution of it is not at once apparent. Why did not Paul claim the rights of Roman citizenship, and stay the hand of violence by putting himself and his companion under the mighty ægis of imperial Rome? At a later date, before the magistrates of Philippi, and also in the presence of the Chiliarch in Jerusalem, Paul did not hesitate to claim the right of Roman citizenship, and that claim was instantly respected, and he was saved from the outrage of the scourge and the chain. Why did he not here so proclaim his right?

There are two answers to this question For one thing, it is not certain that these "rulers" were magistrates of Rome, as were the rulers of Philippi Luke's term is ambiguous. He says, "Both of the Gentiles and of the Jews with their rulers," and this last

clause may refer to the Jews alone, and so may be regarded as meaning rulers of the Jews The word, at any rate, means, literally, "leaders," and may not designate any officials of the Civil Government On the other hand, it is certain that at this time Iconium was not a proconsular or proprætorial city, but a member of an independent tetrarchy, and these rulers, if not limited to the chief men of the synagogue, must have been subordinates of the Tetrarch, and in some sort representatives of the Roman Power It would seem, then, that Paul's claim, had he chosen to make it, might have been of prevailing efficacy

But, for another thing, it does not appear that Barnabas had the right of Roman citizenship And, if this is so, we can well believe that Paul's noble and self-sacrificing friendship for Barnabas would not allow him to avail himself of a defence which his companion could not share Rather than save himself from outrage, to which Barnabas must remain a victim, he will turn his back upon the shield of Rome, and with his friend flee into banishment to the cities of Lycaonia, and the circumjacent regions, bearing always and everywhere the blessed tidings of the Holy Evangel

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Verse 6 Sometimes it is wise to fly from persecution—Vs 7 Providence may close the door in one place, that He may open it in another.

SUB-SECTION 5—*At Lystra and Derbe,—14 8–21a*

8 And at Lystra there sat a certain man, impotent in his feet, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked 9 The same heard Paul speaking who, fastening his eyes upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be made whole, 10 said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet And he leaped and walked

11 And when the multitude saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice, saying, in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men 12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker 13 And the priest of Jupiter, whose temple was before the city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the multitudes

14 But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their garments, and sprang forth among the multitude, crying out, 15 and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea,

and all that in them is: 16 who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways 17 And yet He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness 18 And, with these sayings, scarce restrained they the multitudes from doing sacrifice unto them.

19 But there came Jews thither from Antioch and Iconium; and, having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead 20 But, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and entered into the city and on the morrow he went forth with Barnabas to Derbe 21a And when they had preached the Gospel to that city, and made many disciples, they returned

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1 *The healing of the Lystrian cripple,—vss 8–10* 2 *The proffer of Divine honors,—vss 11–13* 3 *The diadem vehemently refused,—vss 14–18* 4. *The cross instead of the crown,—vss 19–21a*

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1 *The healing of the Lystrian cripple,—vss 8–10.*

The apostles fled to Lystra and Derbe. Their flight led them into a wilder and less cultivated region, toward the southeast, and in the direction of the "Cilician Gates," through the Taurian Mountains The little cities which gave them timely asylum had for centuries disappeared from the map, but the site of each has been recently identified with reasonable accuracy They were located, the one forty and the other sixty miles from Iconium, on the military and caravan road connecting the two Antiochs. The road itself in this region runs along the southern shore of a small lake on the eastern end of the great plain of Lycaonia, and keeps to the north of the so-called "Black Mountain,"—the huge isolated mass of an extinct volcano, rising like a giant directly from a "plain as level as the sea" These Karamanian ridges have no foothills and the level plain runs right up to the foot of the mountain, and with the outlying spurs of the same forms little coves or nooks, in one of which, looking north, nestled the city of Lystra, while Derbe, twenty miles further east, on the same road and at the base of the same Black Mountain looked out apparently toward the sun-rising.

The missionaries, though in flight from their persecutors, did

not confine their efforts to the two cities, but in all the region round about, over the immense plain of Lycaonia, spread the glad tidings Here the congenital cripple of Lystra heard the Gospel and came to believe How he was led to faith we are not told Every reader of Luke's narrative must have noticed how much his case is like to that of the cripple at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple in Jerusalem And we wonder if the hearing of this gracious miracle at the hands of Peter and John did not encourage him to believe that the same Divine Lord could and would do the same for him through Paul and Barnabas However it came about, Paul, observing him intently, saw that here was no gaping curiosity-monger, interested in a general way in what the preacher said, but one whose humble mien and trusting expectancy surely betokened a spirit akin to the leper before the Master, who cried, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou can'st make me clean" And instantly for the honor of his Divine Lord, and the spread of the Gospel, he himself in triumphing faith summoned the forces of Omnipotence to exert their healing power And lo! the cripple was immediately made perfectly whole!

Verse 9 The faith of miracles and saving faith are not the same, but may sometimes, as probably here, be manifested by the same person

Vss 8–17 THE MIRACLE AT LYSTRA

I It arrested public attention
II It was perverted by the idolaters
III It confirmed nature's revelation of God

Vss 9–10 THE CRIPPLE AT LYSTRA

I. What was it that preceded his faith?
II Wherein lay his faith to be healed?
III The spiritual teaching of the miracle—(*Spurgeon*)

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2. *The proffer of Divine Honors,—vss 11–13*

The immediate effect of the miracle was not helpful to the cause of the evangelists. Satan is ever ready to pervert the richest blessings of "a wise, holy and tender Providence." And these Lycaon-

ians, recalling the fabled metamorphoses of their heathen divinities, in this same region, as sung by the poets of Rome, believed that now for a fact their gods had come down from heaven to earth in the likeness of men. They called Barnabas, Jupiter,—an incidental testimony to the large and stately appearance of the Cypriote "Son of exhortation," and Paul they called Mercury, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Jupiter was ready to take advantage of the popular excitement and lead his countrymen in sacrifices and ascriptions of divine honors to these messengers of the King of Kings The temple gates are open, the oxen and garlands are before the altar, and the multitude is ready to give that glory to mortal men which belongs to Jehovah, God of heaven and earth! It was an awful perversion of the right ways of the Lord It seemed as if the beneficent work of the missionaries was about to be swept away in a delirium of universal madness But Paul and Barnabas will not have it so

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3 *The diadem vehemently refused,—vss. 14–18.*

Overwhelmed with horror at the turn affairs were taking, the apostles, with rent garments and indignant protests, rejected the proffered worship, and with earnest entreaty besought the people to turn from these vanities of idolatry to the living God, creator of heaven and earth and sea, and all that in them is. Before these heathen people the messengers of life cannot appeal to any traditions of a true revelation as they might have done in the synagogue. And so, as Paul did at Athens, they carry their deluded hearers directly into the presence of the uncreated and omnipotent God He was invisible but not absent He had seemed to leave the affairs of men to run themselves, but had never left Himself without witness to the goodness of His nature and the benign character of His government "In the generations gone by He had suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways And yet he left not Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness."

Impressed by the apostles' words with the fact of the existence and rule of such a God, and convicted of their vile ingratitude in

proffering to their fellow-creatures the worship which of right belonged to Him alone, the multitudes are turned, even though with difficulty, from their idolatrous purpose; and a strong foundation is laid for the proclamation of the Christian revelation,—of which we may be sure the evangelists took immediate advantage And the subsequent history reveals the success of their work. We meet as trophies of this campaign in Lystra the beloved Timothy, and the faithful women, his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois. The harvest on this field may have been small, but the garnering was of the finest of the wheat

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Verse 17 God often seems to, but does not ever, forsake the world which He has made

Vs 15 THE FOLLY OF IDOLATRY

I It is degrading to man
II It is dishonoring to God
III Its sacrifices bring no help

Vs 15b HUMAN NATURE EVERYWHERE THE SAME

I All men are mortal
II All men are sinners
III All men are lost and need a Saviour

Vs 17. NATURE

I What it reveals of God
II It fails to reveal help for the sinner

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4. *The cross instead of the crown,—vss 19-21a*

The apostles rejected the diadem of divine honors, and now they must needs bear the cross So did their Master before them The multitude one day cried Hosanna, and the next shouted Crucify Him. The Lystrians were not less fickle than the rabble of Jerusalem The unbelieving and disobedient Jews of Antioch and Iconium were not satisfied with driving Paul and Barnabas out of their midst, but followed them with an implacable hatred and unrelenting persecution: and so the conflict, begun in Antioch and

continued in Iconium, is resumed in Lystra, and carried on to what the enemy believed was a fatal conclusion. "Then came Jews from Antioch and Iconium; and, having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead." It seems almost incredible that such a sudden and utter revulsion of feeling could have taken place under any imaginable influence. Doubtless the Jews sought and were able to persuade these Lystrians that inasmuch as these strangers disavowed any supernatural origin they must be ministers of evil powers, and as such were dangerous to the peace of the city, and ought to be driven from the ranks of men

But once more the forces of evil were defeated Paul was not dead. Whether through some miraculous healing power or not we are not told, "but as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and entered into the city, and on the morrow he went forth with Barnabas to Derbe." No particulars are given us of their ministry in Derbe It seems to have been greatly blessed; and Luke's narrative assures us that they made many disciples there And an incidental reference in another place (20.4) leads us to believe that it may have been a very fruitful ministry. Gaius of Derbe, who with others waited for Paul at Troas, on the final home-coming journey, was probably a convert during this first visit to the Lycaonian city.

Verse 19 The fickleness of popular favor —Vs 19 Persuasion to do wrong involves both parties in a guilty conspiracy —Vs 20 The "story must be told" at whatever cost,—if not here, then there; and the Lord of the field will see that a harvest cometh in in its season.

SUB-SECTION 6—*The Return,—vss 14 21b–28.*

21 They returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch, 22 confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God 23 And when they had appointed for them elders in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed

24 And they passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia 25 And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia;

26 and thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been com-

mitted to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled 27 And when they were come, and had gathered the Church together, they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and that He had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles 28 And they tarried no little time with the disciples

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1 *Confirming the infant Churches,—vss 21b–23* 2 *Evangelizing by the way,—vss 24–25* 3 *The home-coming and report,—vss 26–28*

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1 *Confirming the infant Churches,—vss 21b–23.*

It was a brave thing for the evangelists to double on their tracks, and in the face of all possible dangers return the way they came. At Derbe they were but a short distance from the Cilician Gates through the ranges of Mount Taurus, and in a short time they might have passed through, and speedily found their way to the city of Tarsus and their friends Possibly this avenue of travel was still too beset with danger from highwaymen and robbers for a small company to utilize it. But we may be sure questions of personal safety did nothing whatever to determine the direction of their going Paul and Barnabas were chiefly concerned for the spiritual welfare and progress of the converts whom they had won to Christ by their faithful ministry And so they revisited the scenes of their trials and successes, not needlessly courting danger, but seeking to finish the work from which they had been driven by persecution

It is interesting to observe how the apostles confirmed the faith of the new disciples (1) They promised them abundant trials, and assured them that only through much tribulation could they enter the kingdom of God Paul was taking the same course with them that his Master had taken with him The Lord had said to Ananias of the persecutor, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (2) They organized the disciples into Churches, and ordained them elders in every place to rule over them and minister to their help and progress It is possible to serve the Lord Christ alone, and the believer must sometimes walk by himself, and find solace in trial and strength for service, in the presence and companionship alone of his gra-

cious Master. But He, who in the beginning saw that it was not good for man to be alone, has ordained that commonly the highest development of the Christian character and the most efficient exercise of the Christian graces and activities shall come in connection with the organized Christian congregation So the apostles appointed for their converts elders in every Church. (3) Then, unable to do more for them, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed And this was the best thing of all. So it ever is We cannot remain indefinitely with those whom we have won to Christ: but we can, with earnest prayer and even fasting, put them in the hands of the Lord, whom we have persuaded them to accept and trust In His divine keeping they shall be forever secure

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Verse 22 Caring for new converts is an important part of the minister's work—Vs 22 Continuing in the faith is the best test of its genuine beginning—Vs 22 Afflictions are a necessary element in spiritual progress, why?—Vs 23 The organized Church, with its officers, sacraments, and services, was instituted by Christ, and "out of it ordinarily there is no salvation"—Vs 23 The business of the Church, not less than preaching of the Gospel, calls for earnest prayer—Vs 23 Fasting is an extraordinary means of grace In New Testament usage it was resorted to apparently only on extraordinary occasions—Vs 23 Putting our believing friends in the hands of the Lord is the best thing we can do for them

Vs 22 The Disciples Confirmed

I What is meant by "confirming the souls of the disciples"?
II Whence the necessity of such confirmation?
III How is it ordinarily to be obtained?—(*Fleming, Rev. Dr Thomas*)

Vs 22 The Benefits of Afflictions

I They loosen the world's hold upon us
II They reveal the weaknesses of our characters.
III They bring us into closer fellowship with Christ
IV They increase our longings, and help us to prepare for heaven

Vs 23 Spiritual Forces.

I The influences of spiritual leadership
II The forces of spiritual intercession and sympathy
III The grip of the Lord Christ on the believing soul

(*Thomas, Rev. John.*)

2 *Evangelizing by the way,—vss. 24–25.*

On this return journey we may be sure the missionaries did not confine themselves to the confirmation of the new disciples. As they descended from the table-lands of Pisidia, and sought the coast probably through the valley of the river Cestrus, they doubtless preached the Gospel everywhere in the going down. but it was chiefly in Perga that they tarried and "spoke the word." This was the city where they landed from Cyprus, but they did not tarry there, when outward bound Why did they so, on the homeward journey? The question suggests some interesting thoughts concerning the time of their visit, and the duration of the first missionary journey.

Thinking of the latter first, it seems likely for various reasons, needless to detail here, that this first evangelistic tour was accomplished within the limits of one year, or even less The messengers utilized the sea both going and coming, and, of course, made use of the sailing vessels of the commercial world for the accomplishment of their voyages both out and in In our day the navigation of the Mediterranean is a comparatively simple affair, and there is no cessation of it the year round. But in apostolic times it was confined for the most part to the summer season. It opened with the rising of the Pleiades, i. e, in the month of March. And, while it did not absolutely close till about the middle of November, it was regarded as unsafe as much as six weeks earlier, as we learn from Paul's voyage to Rome, when, near Fair Havens, as Luke says, "the voyage was now dangerous, because the Fast (i e, the day of atonement, i e. about the time of the September equinox) was already gone by" It is believed that ample time for all the incidents of this first missionary journey will be afforded if we suppose it began about the middle of March, and closed about the middle of October.

The apostles, therefore, were preaching the Gospel in Perga in the autumn, after a summer campaign in the elevated regions of Pisidia and Lycaonia. And they tarried in Perga, because, with the passing of the summer heats, the people had returned to the low-lying coast; and so were accessible, as not before, to the messengers of grace. But they could not tarry long even now, if they would secure transportation to the Syrian Antioch And, no

vessel offering at Perga, they had to hasten onward sixteen miles further to Attalia, whence they sailed to the Orontes, accomplishing there the last stages of the eventful journey.

Verse 25 A door closed at one time may be opened at another. Outward bound the evangelists found no opportunity offering in Perga. In the return her gates were opened

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3. *The home-coming and report,—vss. 26–28.*

The narrative makes the following points. viz—(1) They gathered the Church together. It was a day of "good tidings," and they would make the hearts of their brethren glad. (2) They reported to those who "had committed them to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled" (3) The modesty of their report is notable. Luke speaks of the work, "which they had fulfilled" The missionaries themselves put it in a very different way,—"They rehearsed all things," not that they had done, but "that God had done with them, and that He had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles"

Verse 26 To be commended to the grace of God for any work gives us courage and the hope of success in it—Vs 27 Whatever our brethren may think we have done for the Lord, we know in our hearts that the Lord has done it for us We are only instruments.—Vs 27b It is a blessed and glorious fact that the door is open! "Whosoever will may come" "Let him take of the water of life freely"

Vs 27 The Door of Faith.

I. It opens to eternal salvation
II It opens to a world-wide fellowship
III It opens to a blissful immortality

Vss 26–27 The Model Missionary Meeting

I The missionary enterprise is unquestionably right
II It demands our prayers
III It is the cause of the Church
IV. It has a history worth relating
V It is under the special direction of God—(*The Homilist*)

VSS 19-28 THE END OF THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

The apostles' method of forming and feeding the Churches in pagan communities

I Evangelization
II Organization
III Edification —(*Pierson, Rev Dr. A. T.*)

SECTION 2—THE TESTIMONY OF THE FIRST CHRISTIAN COUNCIL,—15 1-35

SUB-SECTION 1.—*The Report,—vss 1-5*

1 And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them,

The brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question 3 They therefore, being brought on their way by the Church, passed through both Phœnicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles and they caused great joy unto all the brethren

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the Church, and the apostles and elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with them 5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses

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1 *The dispute in Antioch,—vss 1-2a* 2 *The reference and deputation to Jerusalem,—vss 2b-3* 3. *The case presented,—vss 4-5*

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1. *The dispute in Antioch,—vss. 1-2a.*

The Church at Antioch was prospering, and, for a long time after their return, Paul and Barnabas remained in the city, doubtless in the quiet prosecution of their evangelistic ministry But Satan was not minded that the Church should have peace and success His emissaries were ready to distract, divide and destroy the work of the Lord Luke, with the colorless calmness of a historian, speaks of these emissaries as "certain men who came down from Judea."

We must needs inquire, What was the exact point of dispute? These "men from Judea" were Christian believers, at least nominally so. They did not deny the justice of the claim of the Gentiles to the rights and privileges of Christian discipleship. But these privileges and rights could not be justly claimed, nor was salvation possible,—so they taught,—save in submission to "circumcision according to the custom of Moses" These Mosaic institutes were of Divine appointment The rite of circumcision had been ordained, for one thing, in order to separate God's people from all nations of men And, as in the past, people of other nations might share the blessings of the chosen race, by being circumcised, and thus enrolled as "proselytes of righteousness," so under the Gospel the condition of the unchanging law was the same and this, therefore, was their judgment, "Except ye be circumcised ye cannot be saved"

Paul and Barnabas could not admit the justice of such a judgment They contended that the adoption of such a principle would utterly destroy the free and gracious character of the Gospel, and make salvation turn upon the observance of an external ceremony They would emphasize the fact that the same Lord who had given circumcision to His people of old had now, in the very terms of their evangelistic commission, made imperative the sole and only condition of salvation to be faith in the crucified and risen Redeemer,—"He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned" As Paul afterwards wrote to the Colossians, the Lord Christ had "blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against them, that was contrary to them, and had taken it out of the way, nailing it to His cross"

Such was the alignment of forces in this first great controversy of the Christian Church The differences between the parties were radical It was no dispute about non-essentials; it had respect to fundamentals No discussion in the Church of Antioch would settle the matter An authoritative decision was called for This was evident to all, and all united in referring the question to the judgment of the Mother-Church

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Verse 1 The zeal of errorists often shames the apathy of those who hold the truth—Vs 1 A false application is here made of the just maxim, —The reason of the law remaining, the law itself abides—Vs 1 The formalist exalts the non-essentials into a necessity

2 *The reference and deputation to Jerusalem,—vss 2b–3.*

"The men from Judea" were willing to make such a disposition of the case, because of their conviction that the decision would be in their favor Indeed, they appear to have assumed from the beginning to speak for the authorities in Jerusalem,—an assumption not warranted by the facts, and which the Council itself subsequently disavowed (vs. 24). Paul and Barnabas, and those who thought with them, were also quite willing to refer the case, because of their conviction that the central and governing principle in the dispute had already been declared in the judgment of the Mother-Church in Jerusalem on the course and conduct of Peter in the home of the Centurion of Cæsarea

So the controversy in Antioch was stayed, and representatives of both parties were sent up to Jerusalem It is a notable fact, and to the credit of both sides, that there was no renewal of the dispute *en route,* if indeed they traveled together, which, of course, while likely, is not certain Visiting the Churches of Phœnicia and Samaria on the way, the travelers did not detail the purpose of their going, nor carry the rancor of their controversy with them: but they rehearsed the story of the first missionary journey, about which there could be no question And the result was as might have been expected. Declaring "the conversion of the Gentiles, they caused great joy unto all the brethren"

Verse 2b Controversies affecting the whole Church should be determined by representatives of the whole Church —Vs 3 The cost of journeys and assemblies of the representatives of the Church should be borne by the Church —Vs 3b The conversion of the heathen always brings great gladness to all true believers

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3 *The case presented,—vss. 4–5*

"And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the Church and the apostles and the elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with them" There is good ground for believing that this rehearsal was first made to a select company of the apostles and leading men So the evangelists did at the close

of the second missionary journey, as Paul tells us in Galatians 2:2. (See page 290 of these Notes) The leaders of the Church were thus advised, before the meeting of the Council, of the work of the missionaries, and knew how the Lord had set the seal of His approval upon what they had done. It is not too much to say, therefore, that Paul and Barnabas went into the Council, not with things "set up" in their favor, but supported by the favorable judgment of the chief men as to their course in general, though this by no means committed these leaders as yet to the open endorsement of Paul's view of the particular subject in controversy.

And, though the leaders were thus favorably disposed to the missionaries beforehand, the great body of the rulers of the Church were yet to be won And upon the claim of the sect of the Pharisees, who believed that it was "needful to circumcise them, and charge them to keep the law of Moses," "the apostles and elders were gathered together to consider of this matter."

Verse 4 The true missionary will ascribe the glory of what is done to God, and not to his own endeavors He has a right to feel that he is surely, and yet only, a co-worker with God—Vs 5 The conservatives and the progressives alike have a place and a work in the Church, and both deserve to be heard

SUB-SECTION 2—*The Deliberation,—vss 6-21.*

6 "And the apostles and elders were gathered together to consider of this matter" 7 And when there had been much questioning, Peter rose up and said unto them,

Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe 8 And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did unto us, 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith 10 Now, therefore, why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in like manner as they.

12 And all the multitude kept silence, and they hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through them

13 And, after they held their peace, James answered, saying, Brethren, hearken unto me 14 Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gen-

tiles, to take out of them a people for His name 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written,

16 After these things I will return,
And I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen,
And I will build again the ruins thereof,
And I will set it up
17 That the residue of men may seek after the Lord,
And all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called,
18 Saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from of old 19 Wherefore my judgment is, that we trouble not them that from among the Gentiles turn to God, 20 but that we write unto them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood 21 For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath

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1 *The general discussion,—vs 6–7a* 2 *The speech of Peter,—vss 7b–11* 3 *The story of Paul and Barnabas,—vs 12.* 4 *The speech of James,—vss 13–21*

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1. *The general discussion,—vss 6–7a.*

From the word which Luke uses *(Questioning)* it would seem as if this discussion were largely a presentation of the subject from the point of view of the Christian Pharisees And even to their minds the subject appeared chiefly in the form of questioning May we not reverently imagine them troubled with such questions as these, viz—Was not circumcision ordained of old,—an ordinance of Divine appointment? Has God given any intimation of His will that this requirement should be abrogated? How can the ages-old and Divinely appointed restrictions of our Jewish economy be reconciled with the offer of salvation to all mankind except in one way? Admitting that our Divine Lord's command must be obeyed, and the Gospel must be preached to every creature under heaven, how can it be done without breaking down the older and more sacred requirements of the law, except we call upon all, who believe and accept Jesus as their Saviour, to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses?

These and such like questions seem to have been propounded to the Council; and evidently in the judgment of those who asked them they admitted of but one answer, and that answer favorable to their contention.

Verse 6 A free interchange of opinions is likely to elicit the truth

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2 *The speech of Peter,—vss 7b–11*

It was eminently fitting that Peter should first voice an answer to these questionings Had he not been troubled by them himself? And had they not been answered to his mind by the vision of the house-top in Joppa? And under the guidance of that vision had not he, a circumcised Jew, opened the door of faith to uncircumcised Gentiles?

Peter's address was eminently practical He takes the same position before the Council that he had taken fifteen or twenty years before, when they of the circumcision complained of his course at Cæsarea He emphasizes the facts There is no getting around facts And the points he makes are these, viz—(1) God had chosen through him to make the first offer of the Gospel to the uncircumcised Gentiles (2) He had accompanied the acceptance of that offer by them with the gift of the Holy Spirit to them, even as to the company of Jewish disciples at Pentecost (3) That gift had not been conditioned on their submission to circumcision, or any other ceremonial rite. (4) These being the facts, about which as facts there could be no question, what right had they to require of the Gentile converts what the Holy Spirit did not require? (5) This rite of circumcision has been a yoke of servitude both to our fathers and to ourselves If the Lord by His guiding Spirit has chosen to release our Gentile brethren from this yoke, who are we that we should require them still to bear it? (6) The free and gracious principles of the Gospel have delivered men from this bondage to ceremonial observances "We believe that we shall be saved,"—not through our conformity to a ceremonial rite—but "through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner even as they,"—even as the Divine Lord has ordained that they shall be saved by the hearing of faith, and not by the observance of a ceremony.

Verses 7b–11 The possessor of an influential judgment adds greatly to his power by the timely expression of his views Peter and James carried the assembly by wisely waiting till others had had their say before express-

ing their opinions—Vss 7-11 A single pertinent fact is worth days of controversy. The bearing of Peter's fact.—(1) God had sent him to Cæsarea; —(2) God knew the hearts of those to whom He sent him,—(3) God gave the household of Cornelius the gift of the Holy Spirit,—(4) God made no distinction between these Gentiles and the Jews,—(5) God gave to them as to us the cleansing of faith—Vs 10 Putting needless yokes on believers is tempting God,—making trial of His infinite patience and forbearance.—Vs 11 Both Jew and Gentile are saved, if saved at all, in one and the same way, through the grace of the Lord Jesus, by faith in His ever-blessed name

Vs. 11 Grace,—The One Way of Salvation

I. The apostolical confession of faith
II. The converted moral man's intimate statement
III The confession of the great outward sinner when converted

(*Spurgeon.*)

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3 *The story of Paul and Barnabas,—vs 12*

The address of Peter brought the Council face to face with the fact that God Himself had, in the case of Cornelius, settled the admission of an uncircumcised Gentile and his household to all the rights and privileges of Christian discipleship, and did not require him and his to enter the Christian Church through a Jewish gate. It was natural, then, for the Council to inquire whether the facts in the experience of the missionaries from Antioch had any bearing in the same direction So Paul and Barnabas are called upon to rehearse the events of their evangelistic tour. They had told the story to their brethren in Antioch A second time they had gone over the interesting narrative to the Churches on the way to the Council. A third time they had repeated the tale, in private, apparently, to the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem And now the fourth time they are required to tell the story before the assembled Council. They seem to have been called upon to do this; they did not volunteer the information. Their modesty kept them in the background. And this spirit of self-abnegation gave significant form to their rehearsal It was a rehearsal, not of what they had done or said, but of what "the Lord had wrought among the Gentiles through them."

It was a strange and thrilling tale. Silence and wondering praise must have enveloped the contending parties in that first

Christian Council, as God's servants told of their initial experiences in Salamis and in Paphos, and of the judgment of God upon the blinded Elymas. And as they continued the story of their journey to the high lands of Phrygia, and told of those wondrous sabbath days in Antioch, the persecutions of Iconium and Lystra, the wondrous healing of the cripple before the temple of Jupiter, and the precious gleanings of the harvest in little Derbe, the hearts of the Council must have been carried away; and they were ready to join in thanksgiving to their risen and glorified Lord, who had given such victory to his missionary heralds.

Peter's speech and the evangelists' story practically settled the question; and it would seem as if the whole Council must come to this conclusion,—If God has set His seal of approval on the course of our missionary brethren, what are we that we should withstand God? There was one influence, however, yet to be taken account of, the force and direction of which it was necessary to measure, before the decision of the Council could be registered,—that was the attitude of those who still were zealous for the law; and this attitude it was supposed would be set forth by their chief leader And so we come to

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4 *The speech of James,—vss. 13–21.*

This James was not one of the Twelve Apostles. He is known in history as "the Lord's brother," and was the author of our "Epistle General of James" While not one of the Twelve, he had come to a position of commanding influence in the Mother-Church not second to any apostle He was a conservative Christian Jew; and, as is evident from his epistle, laid special emphasis upon obedience to the law He was naturally ascetic in disposition, and had come to be known as a leader of all believers who remained "zealous for the law," and who preferred still to keep "the customs which Moses had delivered to them."

His position, then, on the pending question was of immense moment. Should he side with "the strict constructionists" the Council would be sadly divided; and the progress of the Gospel would be greatly hindered by the unsettled controversy. On the other hand, if he agreed with Peter and the missionaries, the whole

force of the Council would be behind Paul and Barnabas: and the Gospel they preached of salvation by grace, through faith alone in the crucified and risen Nazarene, would have free course and be glorified. We can well imagine, therefore, with what absorbing interest the assembly awaited the words of the great leader They were not long left in doubt

James accepted at once Peter's testimony to the Divine Call of the uncircumcised Gentiles through his ministry And he immediately proceeded to show that this, so far from being contrary to the Divine order, was in fulfillment of God's promises in the prophetic Scriptures The reestablishment of the Jewish state had this ultimate end in view, the calling of the Gentiles,—

> "That the residue of men may seek after the Lord,
> And all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called"

Reasoning from the premises thus outlined the speaker does not leave the assembly long in doubt as to his conclusion That conclusion is this,—In view of the fact that God in accordance with His word of olden time has accepted the uncircumcised Gentiles, who have come to believe, and that, too, without any conformity to an external ceremony,—"wherefore my judgment is that we trouble not them that from among the Gentiles turn to God"

The judgment of James carried the whole assembly, and, as the letter to Antioch makes clear, the apostles and elders came to a unanimous decision on the case referred to them In some subordinate matters also the Council followed the judgment of him whose high honor it is to be known as "James the Just" He would not have the Gentile converts taught anything subversive of salvation by free grace alone at the same time he would guard them against any turning of that grace of God into lasciviousness Therefore his judgment was that they should be warned to "abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood"

And the zealous expounder of the law closes his address with this somewhat enigmatical reason for his position,—"For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath." There are three plausible explanations of these words:—(1) We, who are "zealous

for the law," need not fear that our action will lead to any neglect of Moses, for he is constantly brought before our brethren in every city, being read weekly in the synagogues —(2) These injunctions are not needed by Jewish believers, for they are instructed out of the law as to these things, in the weekly reading of the same, and therefore we need to remind only our Gentile brethren of these obligations —(3) To allow such practices among the Gentiles would be a stumbling-block to their fellow-worshipers among the Jews, to whom they are forbidden in their law, of which they are reminded in the sabbath-day rehearsal of the same

It is likely that the truth will be found in all three of these reasons, though less significance attaches to the last than to the other two in view of the fact that very soon Gentile believers ceased to worship in the synagogues, and built houses of worship of their own

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Verse 12 The miracles wrought by the power of God, through the hands of the apostles, were, and were intended to be, evidences of their Divine Commission They also voiced the acceptance of the Gentiles into the family of God —Vs 14 The election of grace is a solemn, mysterious, yet blessed reality What God did through Peter and the pioneer missionaries of the primitive Church, He is still doing every day and everywhere, visiting the nations, "to take out of them a people for His name"—Vs 15 God's word is often best interpreted by His providences God gave Israel the revelation of the way of salvation, not for Israel alone, but that through Israel it might be made known to all nations —Vss 19-20 The Church of Christ is in the world, not to conserve outworn rites and ceremonies, but by the outshining of a pure and holy example to shame the abysmal degradations of a lost world, and by the power of the Christ-life to lift it up to a plane of purity and peace

SUB-SECTION 3—*The Letter,—vss 22-35*

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole Church, to choose men out of their company, and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas, called Barsabbas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren

23 And they wrote thus by them, The apostles and the elders, brethren, unto the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting 24 Forasmuch as we have heard that certain who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, to whom we gave

no commandment, 25 it seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall tell you the same things by word of mouth 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things 29 that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which, if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you Fare ye well.

30 So they, when they were dismissed, came down to Antioch, and, having gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle 31 And, when they had read it, they rejoiced for the consolation 32 And Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them 33 And, after they had spent some time there, they were dismissed in peace from the brethren unto those that had sent them forth 35 But Paul and Barnabas tarried in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

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1. *The messengers,—vs 22* 2 *The message,—vss. 23-29* 3 *The outcome,—vss 30-35.*

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1 *The messengers,—vs 22*

It was a wise arrangement of the Council to send their own representatives down to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, bearing their written instructions, that there might be no question as to the mind of the Apostles and Elders. The men chosen for this mission were Judas called Barsabbas and Silas. Of the first we know nothing but his name. It is an ingenious conjecture that Sabbas, or Zabbas, was a contracted form of Zebedee, and that Judas Bar-Zebedee was a brother of the elder James and John,—"sons of Zebedee." A more probable suggestion is that he was a brother of Joseph Barsabbas, whose surname was Justus, chosen by the early disciples as a possible successor to Judas Iscariot Of Silas' antecedents we know little more than we do of Judas. But he does not disappear from the history as does his fellow-commissioner. Whether he remained in Antioch after his mission from the Council had been fulfilled, or returned to that city subsequently is left in doubt, in view of the omission of verse 34 in the Revised Version. We know that he became Paul's traveling companion, and shall meet him in various incidents of the subsequent history. The

Philippian episode lends probability to the conjecture that Silas, like Paul, was entitled to the rights and privileges of Roman citizenship. At present he shared with his brother Judas the more honorable, if less advantageous, title of "prophet" in the Church of Jerusalem.

By these men the letter of the Council was carried down to Antioch.

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2. The message,—vss. 23–29.

The letter itself is notable, both for what it says, and what it omits to say There is first an explicit disavowal of all responsibility for the false teaching of the "men of Judea" The apostles had not authorized either their mission or their teaching. Then follows a most cordial endorsement of the missionaries of Antioch, their "beloved Barnabas and Paul" Then, through the Divine guidance having come from many different opinions to a unanimous decision, they claim the mind of the Holy Spirit, and give this as their judgment,—To lay upon them no greater burden than four specified necessary things The contention in Antioch had been about the obligation of circumcision By the elimination of this rite from the list of necessary things, the letter granted liberty to Gentile believers, but in a politic and considerate way that would not needlessly grate upon the sensibilities of those who were most "zealous for the law."

The four necessary things specified in the letter are perhaps strictly reducible to three,—the prohibition of things strangled being due in all probability to the retention of the blood in the animal thus slain Both prohibitions were founded upon the provision of the law that in the blood was the life; and the shedding of the blood was the life and efficacy of the sacrifice, whether of the lamb at the altar, or the Lamb on Calvary. It is not at all certain also that there may not have been to the Jews, and may not now be to us, hygienic reasons for prohibiting the use of the blood as an article of diet.

Possibly these restrictions of the apostolic letter may be still further reduced to two. At first thought we are surprised to find the sin of fornication catalogued with ceremonial observances. The

wonder is not that this sin should be forbidden, but that it should have been thought necessary to specify the prohibition, and in such a catalogue,—as if, in the judgment of the Council, it was no more a sin to commit fornication than it was to eat meat that had been offered in sacrifice to an idol, or, for example, a blood pudding, or some other article of diet, of which blood formed a constituent element

There are two possible explanations of the mention of this sin in the list of prohibited things One reveals the deep degradation of heathenism It was abysmal, and this violation of the law of purity had become so common that the moral sense of even new converts was not shocked by its prevalence in their households The other reason connects this prohibition with the first restriction They were to abstain from the pollutions of idols, as well as from fornication Most prominent among the pollutions of idolatry was the legalized prostitution which formed so frequent an adjunct of the worship of heathen temples And the Council, writing for the benefit of believers who lived under the shadow of the infamous grove of Daphne in Antioch and the Paphian pollutions in Cyprus, could not but voice the call of the Prophets of old,—"Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"

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3. *The outcome,—vss 30–35.*

The home-coming of the missionaries, accompanied by the delegates of the Council, was an occasion of great joy to the disciples in Antioch The assembling of the multitude of believers, the reading of the letter of the Council, and the exhortations of the prophets from Jerusalem, Judas and Silas, made it a red-letter day in the Syrian Capital We shall very much underestimate the authority of the Council, and the efficiency of its decision, if we conclude that the settlement of the controversy effected by the apostles and elders was but partial and temporary So many believe. And it is true that Paul especially met the machinations of the Judaizing teachers almost everywhere in his missionary journeys They hindered his work, and added greatly to the sorrows of his ministry;

and eventually in Jerusalem with the unbelieving Jews led to his arrest and delivery into the hands of the Romans But, after all, they were a comparatively small section of the professing Church. Their influence was constantly diminishing And in the approaching cataclysm of Jerusalem's overthrow they went down to irretrievable ruin, and were heard of no more But the great doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith in Jesus of Nazareth was established upon impregnable foundations, and no ceremonial observance was regarded as essential to its completeness and efficiency

The section closes with the peaceful dismissal of the messengers of the Council, while the pioneer missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, with many others tarried in Antioch, "teaching and preaching the word of the Lord"

Verses 30-35 A halt in the missionary propaganda is wise, if it leads to the removal of hindrances, and the unification of evangelistic forces. Joy, peace, and courage spring up on the settlement of controversies Spiritual strength comes from the ministration of the truth What joy it is to turn from ecclesiastical bickerings to the work of world-wide evangelization!

SECTION 3—THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL AND SILAS,—THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY,—15 36——18 22

SUB-SECTION 1—*The Contention,—vss 36-40*

36 And after some days Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brethren in every city wherein we have proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they fare

37 And Barnabas was minded to take with them John also, who was called Mark 38 But Paul thought not good to take with them him who withdrew from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work

39 And there arose a sharp contention, so that they parted asunder one from the other

And Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away unto Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord

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1 *The occasion of the quarrel,—vs 36* 2 *The cause of it,—vs 37* 3 *The right of it,—vs 38.* 4 *The consequences of it,—vss 39-40*

1. *The occasion of the quarrel,—vs. 36.*

The second missionary journey grew out of Paul's interest in the converts made during the first evangelistic tour. The great missionary was not satisfied with tarrying in Antioch. The door was doubtless wide open for preaching the word in the Syrian capital; but Paul's heart was with his inexperienced brethren in far-off Pisidia and Lycaonia And hence his proposal to Barnabas, —"Let us return now and visit the brethren in every city wherein we have proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they fare." That Paul had intended to confine the proposed visit to the Churches already founded we can hardly believe But it is a noticeable fact that the strengthening of the native Churches was regarded by these pioneer missionaries as of the first importance in the evangelization of heathen peoples. They had ordained them elders, and appointed leaders in every city, and commended them to the Lord, on whom they had come to believe.

But now Paul was anxious to know how they were getting on. He had planted lights in dark places, he would know if those lights were shining all around them. Founded by missionaries, they were to be missionary Churches. So only could the missionary propaganda spread from place to place and people to people. And this was the apostle's thought,—if we would conquer the world for Christ, we must confirm the feeble Churches, and make them strong to spread abroad the glad tidings

This proposal of a second evangelistic tour was the occasion of a quarrel between these old friends.

Verse 36 The care and training of young converts is as important and necessary as the seeking of new ones —Vs 36 The evangelization of every nation must be done largely by its own people —Vs 36 The first and chief work of the foreign missionary must be the strengthening of new disciples, and the raising up and training of native ministers and evangelists

Vs 36. The Second Missionary Journey

I. Decided on.
   1. Reasons for it
   2. Preparations for it

II The plan of it
 1 Revisiting old fields
 2 Opening up new ones—(*Mitchell, Rev Dr. Arthur.*)

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2 *The cause of it,—vs. 37*

Barnabas responded heartily to the proposition of his old comrade, and seemed quite as willing to go as Paul himself But he wanted to take with them again Mary's son, John Mark. Paul was not willing to take him Hence arose the difference between the old friends, and the difference ended in a quarrel and serious breach and separation John Mark had gone with Paul and Barnabas to, and through, the island of Cyprus; but when they came to Pamphylia, he left them, and, as Paul thought, without any justifiable reason returned to Jerusalem

Barnabas was naturally attached to his kinsman, and thought it would be mutually advantageous to give his cousin another trial We have no means of knowing why John did not continue in the missionary service It was certainly for some reason that commended itself to Barnabas, but not to Paul And this difference of judgment grew into feelings of personal alienation We have reason to believe that this element of personal bitterness did not long continue, but, while it lasted, it led to sharp contention and division

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Verse 37 The advancement of kindred by those in official station should be done with extreme care, and chiefly on the judgment of others Even the children of foreign missionaries may not always wisely be inducted into the foreign missionary service

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3. *The right of it,—vs. 38.*

We have hardly sufficient data for reaching a just and impartial determination of the question,—Who had the right of it in this quarrel? But it looks as if we should be compelled, on the whole, to decide in favor of Paul The judgment of Barnabas was likely to be biased in favor of John by the fact that he was his kinsman It is altogether probable, too, that Barnabas, with his usual greatheartedness, may have thought that, notwithstanding his previous conduct, John possessed admirable qualifications for the mission-

ary service, and that it was hardly fair to turn him down after a single trial.

But Paul's judgment was more likely to be clearer than his companion's The desire to advance one's kindred in Church or State has always been a great temptation, and has grown to be a great evil, in which private interests override the public good The case of Barnabas and Mark is a suggestive instance of incipient nepotism, which deserves the frowns of all good men, and merited the disapprobation of the apostle Paul.

It is further noticeable that Paul's objection to Mark was founded on the latter's withdrawal from the work, and that, too, just when it was becoming more and more difficult, and when his services would be more and more needed He had been quite willing to be a missionary among his kindred in Cyprus, but lost heart for the service apparently as they turned their faces to the mountainous regions of Phrygia Such a man, Paul thought, was not of the right kind of stuff to make a missionary He had put his hand to the plow, and, looking back, demonstrated his unfitness for a life of self-denying evangelism

That this view of Paul commended itself to the Church as the right one seems to be evidenced by the fact that, while Barnabas, taking Mark, sailed away to Cyprus without apparently any notice to, or commendatory farewell from, the Church, Paul and Silas went forth "being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord."

Verse 37 It is a valid objection to accepting a candidate for service, to be overcome, indeed, by other considerations, that he at one time "went not to the work"—Vs 39 Good men are not perfect In all personal quarrels the wrong is not usually all on one side—Vss 39-40a If workers cannot agree it is better to separate and each work on his own line, only let each be sure he carries the Divine Spirit in his working—Vs 39 Differences in judgment, and as to matters of principle, should not lead to personal alienation—Vs 40 It is a great matter to be commended by the Church to the grace of God in the work to which we are commissioned

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4 *The consequences of it,—vss 39b-40*

We study this contention between Paul and Barnabas with feelings of sadness Good men sooner or later must get over their quarrels; and this one evidently did not last long Paul soon after

bears honorable testimony to the high character of Barnabas (Gal. 2 13), and still later testifies to Mark's usefulness in the ministry (2 Tim 4 11) But their co-working in the missionary service seems to have almost ended with that first missionary journey It must have been an embarrassing question which confronted Barnabas in Cyprus, and Paul in Derbe, Lystra, etc,—Where is your old comrade?

But God overruled the controversy to the doubling of the missionary forces, and two bands went forth to publish the glad tidings where it had been man's plan to send but one

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Verse 40 God sometimes makes the foibles and differences of His servants to increase the working force of those who serve Him

Vss 36–41 The Quarrel of Barnabas and Saul.

I Probability is no certain guide for us in judging the future
II Little things are often more trying to the temper than great
III Christianity allows scope for discretionary action
IV The best men are not absolutely infallible
V Under the gracious rule of Heaven evil is made subservient to the progress of good
VI Earnest work will inevitably rectify our tempers —(*The Homilist*)

Sub-section 2 —*Old and New Places*,—*15 41——16 10*

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches

1 And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra and behold a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewess that believed, but his father was a Greek 2 The same was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium 3 Him would Paul have to go forth with them, and he took and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those parts for they all knew that his father was a Greek 4 And, as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered them the decrees to keep which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem 5 So the Churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily

6 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia 7 And when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not 8 And passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There was a man of Macedonia, standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us 10 And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the Gospel unto them

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1 *The old places,—Syria and Cilicia,—Derbe and Lystra,—(Timothy).* 2. *The new places,—Phrygia, Galatia, and Troas—(The Macedonian Vision)*

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1. *The Old Places,—vss. 41——16 1–5.*

In this second missionary journey Paul and Silas took the overland route through Asia Minor The first part of the tour was through mountain passes and fastnesses, and ordinarily unsafe for small companies of travelers. Just at this time the dangers seemed reduced to a minimum, and the travelers passed through the Syrian Gates to the north of Antioch, and circling around the Gulf of Issus came into Cilicia Thence, passing through the Amanian Gates, another mountain pass, they would come via Mopsuestia and the modern Adana to Tarsus It was a region with which Paul was familiar. When sent away from Jerusalem to escape the rising storm of persecution, he tells the Galatians (1·21) that he came "into the regions of Syria and Cilicia," and doubtless all along that mountain-bound coast he preached the Gospel, and gathered at least the nuclei of Churches to be fostered later into strong Christian communities

From Tarsus the travelers, soon striking the Roman Military road connecting the two Antiochs, would pass via the famous Cilician Gates through the Taurian Mountains, and find themselves in the neighborhood of Derbe and Lystra, and other cities of Lycaonia The whole journey from Antioch to Derbe would be through a wild and mountainous region, probably on foot, and through many difficulties, "with perils of robbers" on every hand At Derbe they would come to the place where the first missionary journey had ended. The annalist has nothing more to say of the little city. In another place we learn that Paul, either on this visit, or the preceding one, had been instrumental in winning one who

became one of his most faithful attendants. We know him only as "Gaius of Derbe."

Luke's narrative brings to our notice another convert of this region destined to fill an important place in Paul's life and ministry. He had been converted during the apostle's previous visit We know him as the "well beloved Timothy" His was a singularly lovable character, and one of the most interesting of the apostolic history. He became the most intimate and faithful adjutant of the apostle Paul from this time on to the end of his missionary career and martyrdom Deeply interesting is this record of the beginnings of such a life-long fellowship His mother Eunice and grandmother Lois, both at this time probably widows, were serious-minded women of "unfeigned faith," like the saints of the Advent,—Zachariah and Elizabeth, and Anna and Simeon,—"waiting for the consolation of Israel" But they were not, and neither are nor could be described as "devout according to the law," seeing that the mother Eunice had violated some of the most stringent provisions of that law in marrying outside the chosen race, and in neglecting the circumcision of her son Yet that son had been most carefully instructed from his earliest years in the teachings of their sacred writings,—our Old Testament Scriptures. Their hearts had been opened of the Lord to the fullest revelation of Gospel grace under the preaching of Paul. and now this son is chosen by the great missionary to be his companion and helper in the evangelization of the empire.

Two things were requisite to his preparation for this high destiny,—his circumcision and ordination Paul circumcised Timothy and refused to circumcise Titus Was Paul inconsistent? No! Why? He refused to circumcise Titus because it was demanded of him as a needful obedience to the law This Paul denied, and in this way asserted his liberty. He circumcised Timothy in concession to the weakness of his Jewish brethren, and that the work of evangelization might not be hindered Paul knew that, as heretofore so hereafter, the Gospel must in most places get its first public hearing in the synagogue, and an uncircumcised man would be debarred access to all such places of assembly for any purposes of teaching. So he circumcised Timothy.

The young adjutant was also solemnly ordained as an evangelist. Luke says nothing of this; but Paul tells us about it in his

first letter to Timothy (4:14) It must have been a deeply interesting service in the little Church of Lystra Timothy was well known and highly esteemed not only in Lystra, but also in Iconium, and some writers think the ordination took place in the city of Iconium There is no evidence of this in Luke's narrative, or anywhere else It is quite possible that elders from Iconium were present to take part in the ordination of the youthful missionary His mother had taught him the fear of the Lord from infancy and now, that her Lord and his was calling him to this great service, it must have been to her a day of mingled joy and sadness, when he is summoned to leave her in her widowhood (?), and give himself to the missionary work

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Verse 1 The obscure origin of many eminent men Timothy a prototype of many notable servants of God Timothy's mother, when God wants a man for preeminent usefulness He usually intrusts his upbringing to godly and faithful parents —Vs 2 Candidates for the ministry should have an excellent reputation among Christian people —Vss 4–5 The settlement of controversies in accordance with the will of God greatly increases the strength and numbers of the Church

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2 *The New Places,—vss 6–10*

The missionary deputation, thus reenforced, doubtless visited Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia, delivering here as elsewhere "the decrees" of the Council in Jerusalem Luke, however, says nothing of any visit to these Churches At Antioch the many military roads branching out in all directions afforded the evangelists a choice of numerous places for the proclamation of their glad tidings They seem to have chosen to go northward Luke says only, "They went through Phrygia and the Galatian region" Some writers have gone so far as to name the cities which the missionaries visited, but this, however plausible, is all guesswork This much only is certain,—They founded Churches in this Galatian region, to whom not long after, from Ephesus apparently, Paul sent his letter to "the Churches of Galatia" And we infer from that letter that their stay in that part of Asia Minor was much longer than had been intended, because of a serious illness which befell the writer

When at last they were able to leave these elevated regions of central Asia Minor, they found themselves Divinely barred from going either north or south and so passing through Mysia they came down to Alexandria Troas, near the plain and shore of old Ilium They were here come to the end of the eastern continent, and were looking out upon the island-dotted waters of the Great Sea Beyond those islands lay a continent enshrouded in the gloom of heathen darkness It is a notable fact that from these Trojan shores, now for the first time trodden by the missionaries of the cross, just one point of continental Europe was visible Mount Athos, afterward famous as a center of monastic life and learning, rose above the far western horizon, and in the rays of the setting sun shone as a burnished point of yellow-colored flame Catching its brilliant finger in the deepening twilight the Oriental travelers, wondering what providence had brought them down to the Ægean waters, turned in for the night, to be enlightened by the Macedonian Vision

The opulence of Divine resources in communicating the will of God to His servants is suggestively exemplified in this narrative We have seen that the Holy Spirit was taking an active part in the missionary propaganda This is especially noticeable in this second missionary journey, and particularly in this part of it, where the Gospel is about to be introduced on another continent, and to begin its triumphs over the western world It was the Holy Spirit who forbade the evangelists at present to evangelize the province of Asia It was the "Spirit of Jesus" who would not suffer them at this time to go into Bithynia And, having thus hedged up their way on either hand down to the coast, the Master now makes known His will to them in the vision, as some think, of a Macedonian soldier entreating intervention and help,—"Come over into Macedonia and help us" By a vision Peter was led to open "the door of faith" to uncircumcised Gentiles By a vision Paul is led to swing wide the gates of Gospel grace to the nations of another continent.

In the beginning of this work, new in place and people, Paul is to have another coadjutor. Luke, "the beloved physician," here joins the evangelistic forces He is thought by many writers to have been a native of Syrian Antioch,—by others to have been a Macedonian How he comes to meet Paul and his company here

at Troas is not told us It is a plausible conjecture that Paul's friends came to realize, after his severe and trying illness in Galatia, that he needed the constant care and oversight of a medical attendant; and so they procured the services of Luke, who remained with the company till their departure from Philippi At any rate, in the narrative covering this part of the second missionary journey, Luke writes as a member of the company, using always the first person plural, whereas hitherto he has written in the third person It is now no longer "They did so and so," but "We." "Straightway *we* sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called *us* to preach the Gospel unto them."

Verse 6 The Gospel is Divinely prohibited anywhere in the world only for a season The Seven Churches of the Revelation, as would seem, were almost, if not all, subsequently planted in this territory now under ban — Vs 7 The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus — Vs 10 They who follow the Divine leading will not be left in ignorance of the right way — Vs 9 We hear much of the "Macedonian Cry" As a matter of fact,—Oh, the sadness of it!—there is no such cry The people in most urgent need are the most unconscious of their low estate, and are voiceless of any desire for help — Vs 9. "The man of Macedonia turned out to be a woman"—(*Bonar*)

Vss 6–13 PAUL SENT INTO MACEDONIA

I. God guides him
II. The world needs and calls him
III Success attends him — (*Kelsey, Rev Henry S*)

Vs 7 "COME OVER AND HELP US"

I The vision
II The appeal — (*Hastings, Rev Dr. James*)

Vs. 7 THE BAFFLING OF THE SPIRIT

I The baffling of our childish dreams
II. The baffling of our maturer hopes
III The baffling of our attempts at self-expression
IV The baffling of the cravings of the heart.
V The baffling of our desires for rest — (*Morrison, Rev G H*)

Vss 8–16 PAUL'S THIRD VISION

The distinctive character of Christianity.

I Its benevolence
II. Its influence
III Its ministration.—(*The Homilist.*)

Vs. 9 CHRISTIANITY THE HELPER OF HUMANITY.

I. Christianity a system for helping men
II. Christianity a system for helping men through the agency of men.
(*The Homilist*)

SUB-SECTION 3—*At Philippi,—vss 11-40*
(a),—*The Praying Place,—vss. 11-13*

11 Setting sail, therefore, from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis,

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a Roman colony and we were in this city tarrying certain days.

13 And on the Sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river-side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down, and spake to the women that were come together

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1. *The voyage,—vs 11* 2 *The city of Philippi,—vs. 12* 3 *The river-side,—vs. 13*

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1. *The voyage,—vs 11*

It was a small but notable company that set sail on that short and memorable journey Paul and Silas, Timothy and Luke, were the known members of that immortal band There may have been others A quiet sea and favoring winds brought them in two days over a course which in a subsequent return journey the apostle was able to cover only in five days With Tenedos, Imbros and Lemnos on the left, they seem to have crossed almost at the mouth of the Dardanelles, making for Samothrace, under the lee of whose sheltering north shores they anchored for the night. The next day, slipping in between the island of Thasos and the continental shores, they soon came to their landing-place in the harbor of Kavala, known in those days as Neapolis, and related to Philippi as the Piræus was to Athens, Ostia to Rome, or Seleucia to Antioch, being the seaport of the more important city,—in this case a "colonia," or miniature Rome.

Vss 11-15. THE GOSPEL IN EUROPE.

I. The first Gospel in Europe
II. The first Gospel hearer in Europe.
III The first Gospel convert in Europe—(*The Homilist*)

2 *The city of Philippi,—vs 12*

This city was separated from Neapolis, and from the sea, at a distance of ten miles, by a long, low extension of the Pangæus range of mountains running down from the higher ridges of upper Macedonia It was originally known as Krenides, or "The Springs," from the fountains of water abounding in the vicinity, its name being changed by Alexander the Great to Philippi, in honor of his father, Philip of Macedon. The city was planted on the banks of the little river Gangites (modern Angista), and on the edge of the historic plain, where in the autumn of 42 B C the republicans of Rome fought their last great battle, going down to defeat before the Imperial Power

In the period, well-nigh a century since that memorable conflict, Philippi had risen to a position of first-class importance, and had been endowed with some unusual privileges, the chief of which was that it had been made by Augustus a "colonia" "The Roman colonies were primarily intended as military safeguards of the frontier . The colonists went out with all the pride of Roman citizens, to represent and reproduce the city in the midst of an alien population . . Their names were still enrolled in one of the Roman tribes Every traveler who passed through a Roman colony saw there the insignia of Rome He heard the Latin language, and was amenable in the strictest sense to the Roman law." The citizens' affairs were regulated by their own magistrates; and they were not subject in any way to the jurisdiction of the Proconsul of the Province,—whose headquarters at this time were at Thessalonica

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Verse 12 Philippi's comparative importance as a "colonia" of Rome, and as a seat of the first Church of Christ in Europe Brutus and Cassius, Antony and Octavius, with their contending legions dyed the little river with human gore, on its retired banks a few women met to pray, and hear the missionaries of the Cross Which event was the most influential in turning the tide of human history?

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3 *The riverside,—vs 13.*

In this noted city our Oriental travelers found their first resting-place on European soil. Their first inquiry must have been

for a place where their message might gain a hearing. And it seems to have soon appeared that there was no synagogue in the city,—an indication that there were very few Jews in the "colony," which indeed was not strange The evangelists evidently did not think it wise to begin in the market-place At Athens, indeed, Paul went to the agora, or market-place, and also to the Areopagus, but to the latter only on invitation And this gave him standing with his hearers Even in our day the street preacher must find some common ground on which he and his hearers may stand, and where he may build Some such common ground for themselves and their audience the missionaries sought in Philippi They sought in vain, till they came to the "Praying Place" This was outside the city walls, and on the banks of the Gangites From what they had heard they supposed that they had found a place where it was customary to meet to pray There were not enough "devout' souls in Philippi to form a synagogue, but by common consent here in some retired spot on the banks of the little stream a few, chiefly women, met for prayer,—probably on the seventh day suspending for a few hours their little trafficking, and coming together for the purpose of reading the law and chanting the songs of Zion

Hither came the evangelistic company, and sitting in the quiet spot "spake to the women that were come together" Would that we might have heard that first message of the Gospel on the new continent! Would that Luke might have gathered up some few sentences from that saving sermon! We may not know what Paul said But we may be sure it was the same good news he had preached throughout Asia Minor,—in Syria and Cilicia, in Damascus and old Jerusalem

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(b) *Lydia, the Seller of Purple,—vss 14-15*

14 And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there And she constrained us

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1 *Her home,—vs. 14* 2 *Her occupation,—vs 14* 3 *Her character,—vs 14* 4 *Her conversion,—vss 14-15* 5 *Her Christian hospitality,—vs 15*

1. *Her home,—vs. 14.*

The city of Thyatira was situated on the banks of the Lycus, in the Province of Asia, in western Asia Minor. It was founded by Seleucus Nicator, the founder of the Syrian Antioch. Though it afterward became the seat of one of the Seven Churches of the Revelation, at this time it was noted chiefly as a Macedonian colony, and stood in the territory in which the missionaries for some unexplained reason were at present forbidden to proclaim the Gospel. It was a city of diversified industries, and at a later date we find evidences of the existence of many corporate guilds Among them are specially mentioned "robe-makers" and "dyers"

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2 *Her occupation,—vs. 14.*

Lydia was a business woman In those days women were not ordinarily engaged in the world's traffic But for the sale of the wares manufactured in Thyatira, especially the colored fabrics and robes, we can well imagine the service of a capable woman would be well-nigh indispensable Lydia was a seller of purple And in the extension of her trade it was natural that she should journey from her native city,—"a Macedonian colony,"—into far-off Macedonia itself. Still further, it was natural that she should establish her headquarters in Philippi,—a miniature Rome, where, with its aping of imperial customs and costumes, there would be extraordinary demands for her purple robes and brilliantly dyed fabrics of various hues. Her business success seemed to justify the wisdom of her choice of a business home She was evidently prosperous and in good circumstances, with a house large enough, and means affluent enough, to entertain the missionary deputation from the Syrian Capital.

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3. *Her character,—vs 14.*

Lydia was a Jewess, or at least a proselyte to the Jewish faith, and carried her religion with her business, even though she went far from home. Whether she closed her shop on the sabbath or

not, we are not told: but we know that on one Saturday she was at the "Place of Prayer," at the riverside And this seems to have been her custom, for in the historian's most descriptive feature of her character she is spoken of as "one that worshipped God." Waiting for the light she sought the company of those of like serious mind, in the midst of the abounding idolatries of the Roman and Romanized city

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4. *Her conversion,—vss. 14–15.*

The acceptance by Lydia of Jesus of Nazareth as her Saviour is of special value in our day and land, because it is typical of the change which all must experience, however upright in life and noble in character, if they would be saved She was a worthy woman, seemingly of admirable character and blameless life, but, though a worshipper of God, she as yet knew not Jesus, and was ignorant of the only true way of salvation But her heart was opened by the Lord so that she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul The two conversions recorded in this chapter, Lydia's and the jailer's, differ greatly in their attendant circumstances. But they are alike in the two main essentials. Both were wrought upon by the Spirit of God, and in both cases the instrumentality used was the Divine Word.

Lydia's baptism and that of her household followed, and they were all enrolled among the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. The faithful woman could not have been blind to the probable sacrifices this step would involve Her business would probably be ruined Her best customers were doubtless among the titled and great of the city The Duumviri, who would be called Prætors, and the entire patrician class, were not likely to be seen much longer in her house, after it became known that she had allied herself with these emissaries of an intolerant and pestiferous sect, "everywhere spoken against" But none of these things could keep this faithful woman from the public confession of her faith in her Divine Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Verse 14 Nothing is too expensive to God for the salvation of a soul. As He sent Philip to the desert road for the conversion of a man who might have been reached in Jerusalem, so here He sends a preacher over

into another continent to bring salvation to a woman whom He had brought across the sea to hear the word of life—Vs 14b Many of blameless life carry hearts that are closed to the knowledge of Jesus and the way of salvation—Vs 14b The awakened soul will give heed to the spoken word.

Verse 15a The true convert will confess Christ in holy baptism, and, if the head of a house, will seek baptism for all under his roof—Vs 15b. Hospitality, especially to God's ministering servants, when on the Lord's errand, is a Christian duty In this way, as possibly in no other, we can help to bear the expense of publishing the glad tidings

Vs 14. CONVERSION.

I. The agent,—the Lord who opens the heart
II. The instrument,—the Word, to which the awakened soul attends.

Vss 14-15 THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA

I The means of her conversion
II The evidences of her conversion—(*Simeon's Horæ Homileticæ.*)

Vss. 13-14. LESSONS FROM LYDIA'S CONVERSION.

I. The conversion itself
II. Contrasted with that of the jailer
III Compared with the same
IV. Type and model of multitudes of conversions in our day
(*Spurgeon*)

Vs. 14 THE IDEAL REFORMATION

I A reformation effected in the center of existence
II A reformation originated by a Divine Agency
III A reformation which brought the soul into the highest discipleship.
(*The Homilist*)

Vss. 13-16 THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA

I What she was before conversion
II What she did toward her own conversion
III What God did in her conversion
IV. The fruits of her conversion—(*Gerberding, Rev G H*)

Vs 14. THE FIRST CONVERT IN EUROPE

I The universal presence of the Hearer of Prayer
II The silent and unobtrusive progress of the Gospel
III The marvellous intricacy with which the Kingdom of Providence works into the Kingdom of Grace in the conversion of souls.

IV The immediate evidences which the Spirit of God furnishes to every believer, when a genuine work of grace has been wrought in his soul,—

1 The open heart
2 The open mind
3 The open mouth
4 The open hand
5 The open house—(*Robinson, Rev. Dr Charles S*)

(c) *The Pythoness,—vss 19-22*

16 And it came to pass, as we were going to the place of prayer, that a certain maid, having a spirit of divination, met us, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying 17 The same following after Paul and us cried out, saying, These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation

18 And this she did for many days But Paul, being sore troubled, turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her And it came out that very hour

19 But when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they laid hold on Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the market-place before the rulers, 20 and when they had brought them unto the magistrates, they said, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, 21 and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being Romans 22 And the multitude rose up together against them and the magistrates rent their garments off them, and commanded to beat them with rods

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1 *The demoniacal possession,—vss 16-17* 2 *The maid delivered,—vs 18* 3 *The missionaries arrested,—vss 19-22*

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1 *The demoniacal possession,—vss 16-17*

As the apostles went to the "Proseuche," or Place of Prayer, they were met by a poor girl, who was possessed of a spirit of divination, literally a pythonic spirit, or spirit of the python, that fabled monster serpent that was supposed to guard the shrine of the Delphic Oracle. She followed the evangelists and, impelled by the spirit who dominated her being, bore testimony to their high character and heavenly mission,—"These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation." This she did for many days.

There are four explanations of this episode in Paul's missionary experience:—(1) The girl was afflicted with a mild form of lunacy, in which the patient sometimes exhibits remarkable shrewdness and almost preternatural acumen:—(2) It was a case of epilepsy, in which often the seizure is marked by the utterance of words and thoughts of which, after the return to a normal state, there is no recollection, and the origin of which is inexplicable:—(3) It was a case of ventriloquism, here was no dual consciousness; the girl was in the possession of all her mental powers, but, being a bad girl in the employ of wicked men, she pretended to give forth, in the utterance of a ventriloquist, the enigmatical oracles which brought so much gain to her owners:—(4) She was really possessed of a demon, like many in Palestine in the days of our Lord's earthly ministry.

This last seems to be the most satisfactory explanation of the various phenomena exhibited in the case, though much that is plausible can be said, and is said, in support of the other three views. The decisive elements in the case are these,—(1) The girl's being was dominated by a personality distinct from her own,—(2) That personality used the girl's powers of speech for the statement of facts which she herself was not likely to know;—(3) Paul addressed, not the slave-girl, but the spirit which had taken possession of her, and commanded him, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her,—(4) He came out, and immediately, as her owners saw and confessed, her power of delphic utterance was gone.

If now it be objected to this explanation that no spirit of evil would be likely to advertise the character and work of the missionaries of the Cross, it is enough to reply that this is just what the demons did in the days of our Lord, when they cried out, "We know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." And neither the Lord, nor the Lord's apostle, was willing to accept the testimony of evil spirits, however true.

Verse 16. The devil often meets people, even on the way to Church.—Vs. 16. A wicked business will not observe the Sabbath, nor suffer others to keep it.—Vs. 17. Evil powers must often give involuntary testimony to the truth.—Vs. 17b. The character and mission of the Christian ministry.

2 *The maid delivered,—vs. 18*

Paul was sore troubled by the case of the poor slave-girl. The cause he sought to advance was not to be helped by the involuntary cries of the demoniac The spirits of evil may tell the truth under compulsion, but who would willingly receive their testimony? The apostle's heart also was doubtless wrung with anguish and sympathy for the afflicted slave. But he waited for long He endured the trial many days. But at last he could stand it no longer, and he determined to secure her deliverance. But he recognized his own impotence, and invoked the power and mercy of his Divine Lord And soon there dawned the day of Divine intervention Paul turned to the loud-mouthed demoniac, and said, "I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her" And he came out that very hour The powers of darkness could not stand before the Almighty Son of God!

Verse 18 The inadequacy of all explanations of this event that rule out the supernatural—Vs 18b The Lord Jesus is the Master of the world of demons

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3 *The missionaries arrested,—vss. 19–22*

The men to whom the pythoness belonged saw that their lucrative business had been immediately and irretrievably ruined by the intermeddling of these foreign Jews! It was nothing to them that the poor slave had been delivered from bondage to an evil power Their business had been totally destroyed And they laid hold of the chief men of the missionary deputation, Paul and Silas, and "dragged them into the market-place before the rulers," loud in their complaints They were shrewd enough, however, to conceal their self-interest in the cause now laid before the Duumviri It was not, they would have the magistrates understand, that they had themselves suffered great financial loss through these foreigners, but that the religious customs of their imperial city were being endamaged, and the people were being seduced to an unlawful religion. So the silversmiths of Ephesus were disturbed not by the waning sale of the silver shrines, but by the growing disrepute

of the Great Diana of the Ephesians! Any religion that hurts the pocketbook is an impertinence! The Gadarenes would rather have their hogs than the Son of God! The magistrates of Philippi lent a willing ear, prejudiced and unjust, to the hypocritical charges of the slave-owners, apparently made no inquiry into the facts, and hastily stripping the accused commanded them to be beaten with the lictors' rods, and hurried them to prison

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Verse 21 Even wicked men find it difficult to make gains in wicked ways till they first blind their eyes to the wicked character of those ways Such men add to their unlawful doings the sin of hypocrisy, and would find excuse for their wickedness in the supposed evil-doings of others —Vs 22 Unjust judges poison the fountains of justice

(d) *The Jailer,—vss 23-40*

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely 24 who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks

25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them, 26 and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed 27 And the jailer, being roused out of sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword, and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped 28 But Paul cried, with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm for we are all here 29 And he called for lights and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house 32 And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, immediately 34 And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God

35 But when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go 36 And the jailer reported the words to Paul, saying, The magistrates have sent to let you go now, therefore, come forth, and go in peace 37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men that are Romans, and have cast us into prison, and do they now cast us out privily? nay verily, but let them come themselves and bring us out. 38 And the sergeants reported these words unto the magistrates and they feared when they heard that they were Romans, 39 and they came and besought them, and when they had brought them out, they asked them to

go away from the city 40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed

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1 *His needless cruelty,—vss 23-24.* 2 *His conversion,—vss. 25-34.* 3 *The release of his prisoners,—vss 35-40.*

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1. *His needless cruelty,—vss. 23-24.*

The hasty and illegal procedure of the Duumviri of Philippi consigned the defenceless evangelists to the custody of a cruel jailer. And his cruelty had here fitting and abundant opportunity to manifest itself It may be said, indeed, in his behalf that he was a faithful keeper of the prison, and that such precautions as he took for the safeguarding of his prisoners were justified by the special injunctions of the magistrates And this was measurably true But we can hardly think it was necessary for him to confine them in the subterranean part of the prison-house,—the dungeon, not better probably if not worse than Paul's prison in Rome, the Mamertine This the jailer seems to have done, for Luke's suggestive phrase, after the jailer's conversion, is "he brought them *up* into his house"

It was an additional mark of cruelty, gratuitous and unnecessary, that down in that dungeon and darkness he clamped their feet in the stocks, and compelled them to spend the night in the excruciating torture of a constrained situation in which bodily rest would be an impossibility The dungeon and the darkness and the stocks were needless for the safekeeping of the imprisoned missionaries They were the uncalled-for elements of torture roughly applied to suffering saints by an excessively cruel nature

But his cruel reign was brief The Lord had thoughts of mercy for His servants, and for their keeper, the jailer, as well

Vs 24. In the Stocks

I Contentment in our stocks
II We must use our stocks as a stimulus and inspiration
III We must act to the very limit of our freedom

(*Smith, Rev Dr Wilton-Merle.*)

2 His conversion,—vss. 25–34.

The annalist tells the story of the jailer's conversion in a succession of deeply interesting particulars (1) He tells us of the prison prayers and songs. The Lord was with His servants, and His grace enabled them to triumph over their afflictions. The agony of the stocks and the bruising of the lictors' rods must have prevented sleep. But they were powerless to silence the voice of prayer and praise These were unwonted sounds in that Philippian prison Their fellow-prisoners wakened, heard and were amazed (2) The Lord in that midnight hour manifested His power for the deliverance of His servants. "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed" The narrative makes it plain that this earthquake was something more than a merely natural phenomenon The quaking of the ground, even to the shaking of the foundations, might have been such, as also the opening of the prison doors but the loosening of every prisoner's chains was not the work of a natural seismic convulsion. There was here a manifest intervention of God, in which the prisoners and their jailer were alike concerned The jailer realized this, and while his first hurried impulse was to anticipate the judgment of death, which he knew awaited him if his prisoners had escaped, his next and profoundest conviction was that he was in the power of One mightier far than Rome, and that he was exposed to the blastings of His wrath (3) Then burst forth the cry of anguish, as falling at the apostles' feet he gave utterance to the agonizing question of a convicted soul,—"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He came to the sudden and overwhelming realization that he was a lost man,—not lost through any dereliction of duty to the magistrates His anxieties in this direction were already relieved; but there remained the awful concern of a soul self-condemned for the sins of an iniquitous life, standing at the bar of a just and holy God How had he, an ignorant heathen, come to any understanding of his sinful nature, his relations to a Supreme Being, and the claims of a Divine Law? The answer is not far to seek He was living under the reign of law; and he had learned the nature of wrongdoing as related to human justice. The preaching of the apostles,—something of the nature

of which he had doubtless heard, especially of wrongdoing and sin against God, and of a Saviour from sin,—under the quickening of the Divine Spirit led him to see himself as a sinner against God, and to cry, as David of old, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (4) Then followed immediately the message of the Gospel,—"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." This, of course, was but an epitome of what Paul said The proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth as the risen Redeemer exalted at the right hand of God to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sin,—these were the saving truths on which the convicted jailer was invited to rest They thus spake the word of the Lord unto him with all that were in his house (5) The narrative sketches in rapid outline the final stages in the turning of these pagans to the Lord and the constitution of another Christian home in Philippi. The jailer and his household, confessing Christ, were baptized, and entered upon the new life with new joy. He brought the suffering witnesses *up* out of the dungeon, washed their stripes, and fed them at his own table, and "rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God."

Verse 32 Our households are bound up with us in the privileges and responsibilities of the Gospel—Vs 33 The bearing of the household baptisms mentioned in this chapter on the mode of administering the Sacrament is worthy of careful consideration—Vs 40 The joy of a believing family in the fellowship of Christian service

Vs 25 Songs in the Night

I Their inspiration,—Jesus
II. Their independence of circumstances
III A wonder to all auditors

Vs 25 Paul and Silas Singing in Prison

I How they came to sing
II When they sang
III Where they sang
IV What they sang
V The effect of their song
 1 On the prisoners
 2 On the apostles themselves
 3 On the jailer—(*Leavitt, Rev G R*)

Vs 25 Paul and Silas in Prison

I. Happy in the comparative estimate of their gain and their loss
II. Happy in the assurance that their sufferings were the means of great good
III. Happy in their love for Him for whom they suffered
(*Taylor, Rev Dr N W.*)

Vs. 30 The Great Question.

I A question of the anxious.
II A question of the willing
III A question of the responsible

Vs 30 The Great Query.

I Implies a lost condition
II That something must be done
III That something must be done now —(*Wadsworth, Rev Dr Charles*)

Vs 30 Anxiety

I A courteous question
II A practical question
III A personal question
IV Of incomparable importance
V Of one crushed out by his misfortunes
VI. Hasty, urgent, and immediate —(*Talmage, Rev Dr T Dewitt*)

Vs 31 The Great Answer.

I. Remarkable for what it *does not* contain
II Notable for its singular simplicity
III The faith here required takes its noticeable characteristics from its circumstances

Vs 31 Faith and Salvation

I The nature }
II The object } of faith
III The effect }
(*Five Hundred Sketches*)

Vss 29-31 The Philippian Jailer, or Conversion

I. The initiative stages of conversion
II The exclusive means of conversion
III. The glorious issue of conversion —(*The Homilist*)

Vss 30-31 What Must I Do to Be Saved?

I The scene in the prison
II The question
III The answer—(*Hastings, Rev Dr James*)

Vss. 32-34. Household Salvation

A whole household
I Hearing the word
II Believing
III Being baptized
IV. At work for God
V All rejoicing—(*Spurgeon*)

Vs 37 Christian Dignity

I Right }
II Wrong } ways and times of asserting it

Sub-section 4—*At Thessalonica and Berœa,—17 1-15*

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews 2 and Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ 4 And some of them were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few 5 But the Jews, being moved with jealousy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and, gathering a crowd, set the city on an uproar, and, assaulting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them forth to the people 6 And when they found them not, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also, 7 whom Jason hath received and these all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus 8 And they troubled the multitude and the rulers of the city when they heard these things 9 And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berœa, who, when they were come thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews 11 Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so 12 Many of them therefore believed,

also of the Greek women of honorable estate, and of men not a few 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed of Paul at Berœa also, they came thither likewise, stirring up and troubling the multitudes 14 And then immediately the brethren sent forth Paul to go as far as to the sea and Silas and Timothy abode there still 15 But they that conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy that they should come to him with all speed, they departed

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1 *Thessalonica,—vss 1-9* 2 *Berœa,—vss 10-15*

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1. *Thessalonica,—vss 1-9*

One of the great military roads of the Roman Empire extended from Gypsela on the river Hebrus, near the Hellespont, to Dyrrachium on the Adriatic shore, nearly opposite the modern Brindisi It was about five hundred miles in length One hundred miles of this famous Via Egnatia, as it was called, were trodden by Paul and Silas as they journeyed from Philippi to Thessalonica It led them through Amphipolis, thirty-three miles from Philippi, and Apollonia, thirty miles further, to Thessalonica, thirty-seven miles still further, or one hundred miles from their starting-point, and to about the center-point of the renowned highway The missionaries probably broke their journey, and tarried for a night in each of the two cities named in Luke's itinerary Why Paul and Silas did not stop longer in Amphipolis and Apollonia we are not told It seems probable that the promise of success in either place just at this time was not sufficient to over-balance the danger from their proximity to the city they were leaving, and where they had suffered such persecution They seem to have thought it wiser to hasten on to the Proconsular Capital Thessalonica was a "free city," having its own local government, though it was at the same time the headquarters of the Proconsul of the Province. It was the largest and most important city on this part of the Ægean coast, next to Philippi, if indeed it was not larger than that "Colonia." It was beautifully situated at the head of the Thermaic Gulf, and was then, as it is now under its modern name of Saloniki, an important commercial emporium, a vast amount of merchandise both by land and sea passing through its gates. Other important

places of the empire in the course of the centuries sank into obscurity if not oblivion, but Thessalonica has never lost its importance, and to-day, with a population of 100,000, it is the second city in size in the late European portion of the Turkish Empire. It was recently noted as the seat of the exiled Sultan It is still noted for a feature, for which it was beginning to acquire some prominence even in Paul's day There were many Jews in Thessalonica when Paul and Silas entered its gates In modern times there are said to be over forty synagogues in the city, in Paul's time there was apparently but one

And to that one the missionaries soon made their way. It was Paul's custom so to do. The days of the week were doubtless given up to working for his daily bread Work seems not to have been easy to obtain, and he wrought night and day for his living· and the beloved Church of Philippi once and again ministered to his necessities and of them that were with him But the sabbath day furnished special opportunities for preaching Christ, and for evangelistic work

The subject matter of Paul's preaching was doubtless what it had been throughout his missionary tours, especially in all synagogues of the Jews Luke's recapitulation of it therefore, in this passage, is of special interest For three sabbath-days he met his Jewish kindred, and "reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ."

It is worth our while to tarry here for a little time, and endeavor to get an impressive sense of the fullness of meaning in the inspired historian's words. (1) Paul appealed to the rational nature of his countrymen. The Gospel he proclaimed courted their most searching examination He "reasoned with them" (2) The scriptures out of which Paul reasoned was our Old Testament These were the sacred writings which all Jews in Paul's day, as truly as himself, accepted as the oracles of God His discourse was, first of all, an "opening," or exposition, of the teaching of those scriptures touching the Person and Work of the Messiah. The Jews of the Dispersion, like those in Palestine, believed their Messiah was to come as a temporal sovereign to reign over Israel, and to subdue all nations to His and their dominion (3) In this Paul

believed his Jewish kindred were greatly mistaken He found in those scriptures an entirely different Messiah foretold According to his interpretation of those sacred writings it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to die. He was to be not only a Prince but also a Saviour. He was to save His people from their sins, by dying in their room and stead So Philip had taught the Ethiopian Treasurer in the exposition of these same scriptures. (4) Still further Paul found in these scriptures the revelation of the Messiah's resurrection. He was not only to die a sacrifice for sin, but was also to rise again from the dead! It is well to stand here a moment No matter how obscure the fact may seem to us, lost as it is in the brighter revelations of the New Testament, no candid person, who accepts the historicity of Luke's narrative, can fail to believe that Paul taught the Thessalonian Jews that the doctrine of the resurrection of the Messiah was a doctrine of our Old Testament Scriptures

This completed the Apostle's work of exposition He turns now to the testimony In the second part of his preaching he endeavors to show that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled all the conditions of the prophetic writings, and had an irrefutable claim to be accepted and worshipped as the long-expected Messiah and Saviour of the world The presentation of this part of his theme would necessarily involve some rehearsal of the life, ministry and miracles of the Nazarene. These foreign-born and abiding Jews probably knew a little of the events that had so recently transpired in the land of their fathers But of much they must have been only partially informed And the story of the great life, and the tragic death, and the glorious resurrection, as Paul could tell it, must have been surpassingly interesting The entire credibility of the story, too, must have come home to these strangers of the House of Israel The testimony of the witnesses could not but come to them with convincing power Only twenty years had elapsed since the death and resurrection of the Messiah Well-nigh five hundred living witnesses of the risen Saviour's appearance to them yet remained on earth The Thessalonian Jews did not need to depend upon the word of the missionaries alone. But we can hardly doubt that Paul would set himself forth as a living and confident witness of the resurrection of his Divine Lord He afterward, again and again, told the story of "the heavenly vision," and it seems

altogether probable that here, in presenting this part of his subject, he would dwell upon so convincing an evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was the risen and glorified Messiah and Saviour of lost men.

It must have been a masterly presentation of the two-fold theme: and we wonder who could have failed to be convinced that the Old Testament, as we call it, taught that the Messiah was to die for sin, and rise again from the dead, and that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled in every particular these ancient prophecies. Many were convinced and believed. "Some of the Jews were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few."

But the experiences of the missionaries in Pisidian Antioch were to be duplicated in Thessalonica. Many of the Jews were not willing to share these Messianic promises and teachings with their Gentile neighbors. So they gathered a mob of the vilest elements of the population, and set the city in an uproar. They sought for Paul and Silas, and, failing to find them, they dragged Jason, their host, and certain brethren before the Politarchs of the city, upon charges which had in them some measure of truth, but which, so far as the law might have any claim against them, were essentially false. It was true that the mission of the evangelists was to turn the world upside down, yet their behavior had been in every respect that of law-abiding citizens. Their ministry had been exercised in quietness, without noise or tumult. It was true also that they preached that there was another king, even Jesus, but, as the Lord told Pilate, "His kingdom was not of this world." We are not told what defence was made by Jason and his companions; but it was manifestly such that the Politarchs, though troubled at first by the unusual charges, could not fail to see that there was nothing in them of which the law could take any cognizance. And so, taking security of Jason and the rest, they let them go. The superficial and hasty character of the examination by the Politarchs is as evident as was that of the Duumviri at Philippi. If there was little or nothing in the charges, requiring further official notice, the magistrates should have put the Jews alone under bonds to keep the peace. Then the missionaries could have gone on in quietness with their evangelistic work. As it was, if they would avoid involving their friends, the new converts, in trouble, they could do nothing but withdraw from the field at least

for the present And so they went their way, and, turning down from the Via Egnatia, they soon found a refuge and an open door in a less prominent place.

Verse 1 The passing by of some places should be only that the truth may reach them in more favorable circumstances at another time Compare Perga and Ephesus —Vs 2 Utilizing the sanctuary and the Sabbath —Vs 2b Christianity is a reasonable religion —Vs 3 A great revival of Paul's method of preaching would be of vast benefit to the modern Church What he regarded as important and valuable to both Jews and Greeks in his day is equally so to men of all nations and races in our times And his method of presenting the truth would establish the Gospel upon impregnable foundations It would reinstate the Old Testament in its legitimate place as an integral and needful part of the Divine Revelation And it would reestablish the evidential value of miracles as an irrefutable testimony to the Divine legation of Jesus of Nazareth —Vss 6-7. Half-truths are sometimes terrible lies —Vs 6b The upsetting tendencies of the true faith It must overturn and overturn till He whose right it is shall reign —Vs 7b Jesus is a King· this fact must trouble earthly rulers till they bow to His dominion,—see Psalm 2 10-12

Vs 7 JESUS ANOTHER KING

I He is one contemplating exclusively spiritual dominion
II Claiming rightfully unqualified obedience
III Securing infallibly heartfelt homage
IV Expecting confidently universal empire —(*The Homilist*)

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2. *Berœa,—vss. 10-15.*

The city of Berœa, smaller and less conspicuous than Thessalonica, was situated on the eastern slope of the Olympian range of mountains, about sixty miles southwest of Thessalonica. The location was one of unusual beauty, with far-stretching views over the plain, which was intersected by a number of mountain-fed streams, which at certain seasons of the year became torrential rivers. The first part of the journey of the missionaries was by night; and even if the day had dawned by the time they reached "the wide-flowing Axius," they may have encountered here some

of those "perils of rivers," of which Paul subsequently writes to the Church in Corinth.

The fugitives from Thessalonica received a more favorable reception in Berœa than they had secured in the larger cities of Macedonia. They found a synagogue in Berœa; and as "their manner was" they began their missionary propaganda among their own countrymen. We have every reason to believe that Paul preached in Berœa the same truths he had dwelt upon in Thessalonica And the Berœan Jews, manifesting a less prejudiced spirit than those in Thessalonica, "received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so" Luke's significant "therefore" indicates that the result was just what might have been expected "Many of them, therefore, believed, also of the Greek women of honorable estate, and of men not a few." So overwhelming was the line of thought pursued by the preachers of the Holy Evangel that a candid investigation could not but end in conversion, and the acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, Christ of God

Here again the history repeats itself As the enemies of the Cross pursued the missionaries from Iconium to Lystra in their first circuit, so here they came from Thessalonica to Berœa, "stirring up and troubling the multitudes" And again the heralds of the glad tidings had to fly Leaving Silas and Timothy at Berœa some of the new converts, possibly Sopater of Berœa among them, brought Paul down to the coast, whence from some unknown port he embarked for Athens, two hundred miles away, and set sail probably for Phalerum, the eastern port of the classic city. There his new companions left him for the return voyage; and Paul entered Athens alone.

Verse 10. Paul went not as he wished (1 Thess 2·17), but as his Master planned—Vs. 11. The right spirit in which to hear the Gospel is with a frank and open and unprejudiced mind—Vs 11b The true teaching of the Scriptures is to be obtained by searching them. So Jesus taught in John 5 39 All preaching that will not stand the test of searching the Scriptures is false and pernicious—Vs 12 Faith waits on candid hearing and diligent study of the word—Vs. 13 The zeal of the Jews was great, but not according to knowledge,—see Rom. 10 2

Verse 15 The picture of the lone missionary in the literary center of the world

Vss 11-12 BERŒAN NOBILITY

I In their freedom from prejudice
II In their independency of mind
III In their deference to the Scriptures
IV. In their intelligent faith —(*The Homilist*)

Vss. 10-12 THE BERŒANS

I. Their candid attention to the new doctrines
II. Their proper examination of them.
III. Their yielding to the evidence of their truth —(*The Homilist.*)

Vs 11 THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES RECOMMENDED

I The Character of the Berœans
  1 Their laudable spirit of inquiry into religious truth
  2 Their attachment to the Scriptures, and the diligence with which they studied these inspired oracles of truth
  3 The candor with which these inquiries were conducted, and their openness to conviction
II The Imitation of this Conduct of the Berœans
  1 Our duty and right to inquire and judge for ourselves concerning the truths of religion
  2 The Scriptures are addressed to all ranks of persons, and require from them an impartial and careful examination of the truths they contain
  3 They are most worthy of our perusal from the importance of the truths contained in them
  4 The melancholy consequences that flow from the neglect of the study of the Scriptures, and a blind submission to the opinions of men —(*Hunter, Rev Dr Andrew*)

SUB-SECTION 5 —*At Athens,—17 16-34.*

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market-place every day with them that met him 18 And certain also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him And some said, What would this babbler say? Others, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods. because he preached Jesus and the resurrection 19 And they took hold of him, and brought him unto the Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by thee? 20 For thou bringest certain strange things

to our ears we would know, therefore, what these things mean 21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing)

22 And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said, Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious 23 For, as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you 24 The God that made the world and all things therein, He, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, 25 neither is He served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He Himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, 26 and He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation, 27 that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us 28 for in Him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain even of your own poets have said,

"For we are also His offspring"

29 Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man 30 The times of ignorance, therefore, God overlooked, but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent, 31 inasmuch as He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, but others said, We will hear thee concerning this yet again 33 Thus Paul went out from among them 34 But certain men clave unto him, and believed among whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them

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1 *The busy waiting,—vss 16–21* 2 *The address on Mar's Hill—vss 22–31.* 3 *The meager result,—vss. 32–34*

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1. *The Busy Waiting,—vss 16–21.*

Paul's dependence upon his missionary comrades becomes conspicuously manifest in this part of the tour. The necessities of the work seem to have constrained him to leave Luke at Philippi, and Silas and Timothy at Berœa. And those who came with him down to Athens could not remain; so the apostle sent by them an urgent message to his old comrades to come on to him as soon as possible.

Pending their arrival, Paul waited for them with an inexpressible feeling of loneliness and longing for their companionship But his was not an idle waiting The first thing he seems to have done was to take a tour of observation through the city. Vastly instructive must have been that walk with Paul around Athens Nothing escaped his observation. He marked the multitudinous altars, temples, statues and shrines of a city "wholly given to idolatry," that worshipped thirty thousand divinities, and where it became a proverbial saying that "One could more easily find a god than a man in Athens" The eye that rested upon the humble synagogue of his countrymen noted also the altar "To an unknown god", and marked the inscription as a text for his coming address to the literati of the classic capital.

Following this preliminary survey, Paul, though still expecting the arrival of Silas and Timothy, gave himself immediately to his evangelistic work He was probably supported in some measure by the contributions of his beloved Philippian converts, so that he did not need here in Athens to labor day by day for his daily bread; and so "he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market-place every day with them that met him" Luke gives us no particulars of those indoor and outdoor conferences; but, from what the philosophers say, we are warranted in believing that Paul's reasoning was after the pattern of his discourse in Thessalonica At any rate, the thing these philosophers remembered was his testimony concerning the resurrection This was something new. And as the time of these wise men was entirely taken up with the telling or hearing some new thing, they were willing for a time to attend to this "word-spouting Jew," though they could think of him only contemptuously as "a retailer of knowledge scraps," which they were unable to locate, with any articulate connection, in any system of philosophy with which they were familiar "And they took hold of him, and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by thee; for thou bringest certain strange things to our ears, we would know therefore what these things mean."

Verse 16 A justifiable cause of provocation—Vs. 17. A minister among men,—in the house of God, and in the market-place.—Vs 17. The

message of the Gospel is, "Come now, let us reason together"—Vs 18 A false faith fosters the pride of the heart—Curiosity-mongers are not sincere searchers after the truth

Vs 16 THE AWFULLY SIGNIFICANT SCENE.

I The insufficiency of the light of nature to guide men to true worship.
II The moral worthlessness of material civilization—(*The Homilist*)

Vss. 19-20 THE STRANGENESS AND SUGGESTIVENESS OF CHRISTIANITY

I The Strangeness of Christianity
  1 The strangest Person in all history
  2 The strangest fact in that strange Person's history
II The Suggestiveness of Christianity
  1 The more it is studied the more wonders it reveals
  2 The more it is enjoyed the more it is desired—(*The Homilist*)

Vss 1-34 PAUL AT ATHENS

I Paul's moral survey of the city
II His discourses in the Agora
III His discourse on Mar's Hill
IV. His departure from Athens—(*The Homilist*)

Vss 16-34 PAUL ON MAR'S HILL

I The place
II The audience
III The sermon
IV The effect

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2. *The address on Mar's Hill,—vss 22-31*

The first thing to arrest the attention of the reader in this address is the marked courtesy of the speaker He wins the respectful attention of his hearers, not by flattery, but by finding something to commend in them That something was their religiousness. "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are very much devoted to the worship of the gods,—for as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To an unknown god' What therefore ye worship not knowing it, this I declare unto you"

For another thing, we cannot but note the contrast of this address on Mar's Hill with Paul's address in Pisidian Antioch. As these two are the most fully reported of any spoken by Paul in his missionary journeys, this contrast is worth noting and studying In Antioch, Paul was addressing Jews alone; and he commends himself to their friendly consideration, and at the same time introduces his great theme, by a rapid and pregnant survey of the national history It was a story ever old yet ever new to the Hebrew people, and possessing a peculiar charm to the tribes that were scattered abroad. By this course he gained his object,—a hearing, and an opportunity to speak of Jesus and the resurrection.

On the Areopagus, Paul's object was the same, but he reaches it in a different way. There were here no ancestral traditions to which the Christian apostle could refer, and by the reference win attention So he rises at once to God, the omnipotent, independent, creator, preserver, ruler and father of men and from His nature and our relations to Him deduces our duty, and the standard and measure of our obligation All this is done by building on their own admitted principles, and is enforced by a reference to their own writers And, while his words are so chosen as to afford no just ground for offence, his positions are so skillfully yet boldly taken, and so interwoven with the concessions of his hearers, as to overthrow the theories of both Stoics and Epicureans, and to undermine the idolatrous practices of those whose gods were only less numerous than themselves By this course of thought, also, he is led, in the closing sentences, to speak of the themes peculiar to the Gospel and the Christian Revelation

A further brief analysis of Paul's address will exhibit the lofty ranges of his thought as well as disclose the wonderful skill with which, though interrupted, he is able to introduce some of the essential truths of the Christian religion

In seven particulars he discusses the general doctrines of a rational theistic belief, e g (1) The existence of God,—(2) God is the creator of the world, and all things therein;—(3) The immensity of God,—"He dwelleth not in temples made with hands,"—(4) The independence of God,—"Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He Himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things"—(5) The unity of the human

race,—"He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth;"—(6) The purpose of God's arrangements respecting the human race,—"Having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us,"—(7) The spirituality of God and religion,—"We are also His offspring Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man"

At this point the apostle enters upon the presentation of the truths which, in a special sense, distinguish the Christian Revelation These which he mentions are three,—(1) God now calls all men everywhere to repentance,—"The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked, but now He commandeth that they should all everywhere repent,"—(2) This call to universal repentance is in view of the coming general judgment.—"Inasmuch as He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained,"—(3) The certainty of that judgment is certified to us by the resurrection and enthronement of the Judge of the quick and the dead,—"Whereof He hath given assurance to all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

Verse 22 Commending men in a right way may win them to the truth Vs 26 The unity of the human race—Vs 27 The distributions of the race are with this end in view,—their seeking after and finding God—Vs 28a The Divine immanence,—"In Him we live, and move, and have our being"—Vs 28b A good way to reason with men is to argue from what they do believe to what they ought to believe—Vs 30 The revelation of a way of salvation is a special call to universal repentance—Vs 31 God summons us to repentance in view of the judgment—Vs 31b The resurrection of Christ is a testimony to the certainty of the coming judgment—Vs. 31a Jesus Christ is ordained to be the judge of the quick and the dead

Vs. 23 The Unknown God

I In His relation to Nature
II In His relation to Man—(*The Homilist*)

Vss 22–23 An Unknown God

I Gods many.
II An unknown God
III The only living and true God—(*Hastings, Rev Dr James*)

Vs. 27b. THE NEARNESS OF GOD.

I He is locally near.
II. He is relationally near.
III. He is sympathetically near —(*The Homilist*)

Vs. 29. MAN THE OFFSPRING OF GOD.

I This glorious fact in our nature indicates constitutional resemblance to God
II It suggests the rationale of the Divine Laws
III. It explains the interpretation of Christ
IV. It exposes the enormity of sin
V. It aids us to estimate the transcendent blessedness of the dutiful (*The Homilist.*)

Vs 30 GOD, AND THE TIMES OF IGNORANCE.

I. There is progress in the Divine Revelation
II. There is an accommodation in the Divine Revelation
III. Through this partial and accommodated revelation God is continually working toward His own perfect ideal —(*Vincent, Rev. Dr M R*)

Vss 30-31 REPENTANCE.

I. Repentance under the Christian Dispensation is especially binding upon all men everywhere.
II The Day of Judgment is a special argument for this repentance
III The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a special proof of a Day of Judgment.—(*The Homilist*)

Vss 30-31. THE GOSPEL AGE.

I. The one great duty of man in the Gospel Age
II. The one grand prospect of man in the Gospel Age
III The one demonstrating fact for man in the Gospel Age (*The Homilist.*)

Vss. 24-31. PAUL'S SERMON ON MAR'S HILL.

I. The Errors refuted
1 Of the Naturalist,—declaring creation the work of God.
2 Of the Pantheist,—showing God not identified with the essence of the universe, but separate from it, before it, above it, and supreme over it.

3 Of the Positivist,—demonstrating God to be a personal being, intelligent, loving, and paternal
4. Of the Evolutionist,—pointing out special interventions in nature, and the constant exercise of a providence superior to "the laws" by which He ordinarily works

II. The Truths taught.
1. He gives in creation the true Cosmogony
2 Of the origin of man he gives the true Anthropology
3. Of the resurrection and the final judgment he gives the true Eschatology—(*Hoge, Rev Dr. Moses D*)

Vs 31 THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

I The time is not revealed
II The rule is a righteous one
III. The Judge is Jesus Christ—(*Foot, Rev Dr J I*)

Vs 31. THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF THE JUDGMENT.

I The time,—an appointed day
II. The judge,—the risen Christ
III The judged,—angels and men
IV The matter traversed,—"every work"

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3. *The Meager Result,—vss. 32–34.*

The wise men of Athens were not willing to accept the stranger's teaching concerning the resurrection? And the general result of Paul's labors in the city was pitifully small. "Some mocked," some would hear him again, and some believed. "Certain men,"—among them Dionysius of the Supreme Court, and one woman, Damaris by name, and some others,—this is the sum total! In contrast with the great multitude of converts at Thessalonica, and the many, both men and women of honorable estate, in Berœa, the outcome of Paul's evangelism in Athens was as the "gleanings of the vintage."

Verse 33 Paul went from them apparently to return no more Opportunities neglected are generally lost forever Why Athens closed the door Was it not her self-sufficiency?

SUB-SECTION 6—*At Corinth,—and the end of the Second Missionary Journey,—18·1–22*

1 After these things he departed from Athens, and came to Corinth 2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome and he came unto them, 3 and because he was of the same trade he abode with them, and they wrought, for, by their trade, they were tent-makers 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks

5 But, when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ 6 And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook out his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles 7 And he departed thence, and went into the house of a certain man named Titus Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue 8 And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized 9 And the Lord said unto Paul, in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace 10 for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee for I have much people in this city 11 And he dwelt there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them

12 But, when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul, and brought him before the judgment-seat, 13 saying, This man persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If, indeed, it were a matter of wrong, or of wicked villainy, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you 15 but if they are questions about words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves, I am not minded to be a judge of these matters 16 And he drave them from the judgment-seat 17 And they laid hold on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat And Gallio cared for none of these things

18 And Paul, having tarried after this yet many days, took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila having shorn his head in Cenchreæ, for he had a vow 19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews 20 And when they asked him to abide a longer time, he consented not, 21 but, taking his leave of them, and saying, I will return again unto you if God will, he set sail from Ephesus 22 And when he had landed at Cæsarea, he went up and saluted the Church, and went down to Antioch.

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1 *The place, friends, and work,—vss. 1–4* 2 *Opposition and encouragement,—vss. 5–11.* 3 *The arrest, and release,—vss. 12–17* 4 *The return to Jerusalem and Antioch,—vss 18–22*

1. *The place, friends and work,—vss 1-4.*

Corinth, the other "eye of Greece," Athens being one of the two, lies on the isthmus of the same name about forty miles west of Athens It was a pro-consular city, and capital of the province of Achaia. It had grown rapidly in a hundred years, springing out of the ruins of the old city, and developing a vast commerce with both the Orient and Occident, through its eastern and western ports,—Cenchreæ on the Saronic Gulf, and Lechæum on the Gulf of Corinth It was the most dissolute and profligate city in the Empire, surpassing in wickedness, it is believed, even its three great capitals,—Rome, Antioch and Alexandria

Paul might reach Corinth by the overland route, or by way of the sea His poverty, haste, and infirmities would probably lead him to avoid the tedious walk overland, when five hours of restful sailing would carry him from the Piræus to Cenchreæ, whence a walk of eight miles up the little valley of the Hexamili would bring him to the city of his destination

The most conspicuous object in the western landscape, as Paul drew nigh to the great commercial center, was the Citadel of Corinth, rising on its rocky summit two thousand feet above the level of the gulf and city, and impregnable to any assault by primitive weapons of war This must first have caught the eye of the pilgrim Paul as he trod the little valley, and set him to thinking anew of the voluptuous city, lying on that "narrow neck of land." Happily we have from his own pen some revelation of his thoughts He seems to have been unusually depressed in spirits He confesses to the Corinthians afterward that he was with them "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" Apparently he was much cast down, not only by the continued absence of his comrades (for he had come on from Athens to Corinth alone), but also by his comparatively unsuccessful ministry in Athens And as now he confronted the greater city, and compassed the magnitude of the work before him, he threw himself more unreservedly upon his Lord, and solemnly vowed renewed fidelity to his great commission He says to the Corinthians afterward, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

In this lofty spirit of increased devotion, Paul entered Corinth As in other places, he first of all sought for lodgings, and then some means of earning his daily bread A gracious Providence favored his search. He soon found an abiding-place and work with his fellow-countrymen, Aquila and Priscilla, who, like himself, were tent-makers. They had been banished with other Jews from Rome by the emperor Claudius. It does not clearly appear whether they were already Christians, or were converted through Paul's ministry. It is supposed by some that they were already believers and were really the founders of the Church in Rome However this may be, it is certain that they and the apostle soon became very dear friends, and wrought together both in the prosecution of their trade, and in the fellowship of the Gospel.

The days of the week were spent by Paul in making tents They were, indeed, off the lines of caravan travel, and, because the trade of the world to this city came largely via the sea, there could not have been as great a demand for their tents as further north, and on the uplands of Asia Minor But they shared the meager profits of their business, and were able to live And soon Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, bringing needed help in the contributions of the older Churches of Philippi and Thessalonica But the work in which Paul most delighted was the preaching of the glad tidings in the synagogue every sabbath As before in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berœa, and Athens, so here he reasoned with his Jewish brethren, doubtless on the lines of his constant message, opening and alleging a suffering Messiah as revealed in the risen Jesus of Nazareth

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Verse 1 Christian work in a university town is likely to differ widely from that of a commercial metropolis—Vs 2 The timing of events is a notable feature of God's providence the banishing decree of Claudius provided a home and fellow-workers for Paul, when he greatly needed both—Vs 4 The end of scriptural reasoning is persuasion

Vss 1–18 Paul at Corinth

I A propitious concurrence of circumstances in his ministry in Corinth
II. The value of his handicraft in that ministry
III The stimulating influence of cooperation in that ministry
IV The law of responsibility in connection with that ministry

V The change in his sphere of labor
VI The moral triumphs of the Gospel
VII. Divine encouragement in that ministry—(*The Homilist.*)

Vss 1–18 PAUL AT CORINTH

I His discouragements.
  1 His personal loneliness
  2 The lawlessness and liability to tumult of a community held together merely by the love of pleasure or greed of gain
  3 Apprehension of the unacceptability of Gospel preaching to such a people
II His encouragements
  1 Assurance of temporal support
  2 Assurance of efficient helpers
  3 Assurance of a suitable place for his services
  4 Assurance of protection from enemies
—(*Witherspoon, Rev Dr T. D*)

Vs 3 ST. PAUL A TENT-MAKER.

I Labor is God's ordinance
II When God has instituted the means we can have no right to be looking for miracles—(*Melvill, Rev Dr Henry*)

Vs 3 TENT-MAKING AS A BUSINESS

I Paul chose a decent and reputable calling
II He sought consistent companionship in his business
III He pursued the work of his calling honestly
IV. He held his business cautiously in hand there in Corinth
V He used his opportunities wisely, even when hardest at his work
(*Robinson, Rev Dr Charles S*)

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2. *Opposition and encouragement—vss 5–11*

Paul was comforted and strengthened by the coming of Silas and Timothy; and gave himself with extraordinary fervor to the work of reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue, and to testifying to the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. The language of the historian gives one the impression that Paul now surpassed himself in devotion of spirit and cogency of argument. But his Jewish

kindred would not receive his testimony They opposed his ministry and blasphemed the name he sought to exalt above every name. Then Paul felt that his work was done among the Corinthian Jews "He shook out his raiment, and said to them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" He ministered to the Jews of Corinth no more; and never again, so far as we know, went into their synagogue

But there was much encouragement as well as opposition. Some of the leading Jews were converted The house of Titus Justus afforded the apostle an asylum, and Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, became a believer "with all his house" "And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized"

Chiefest of all the encouragements which Paul received came to him in the vision of the night-watches The Lord Himself said to him, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee · for I have much people in this city" It was the promise of the missionary commission brought home to the feeble, buffeted, but indomitable evangelist and in the strength of it he continued eighteen months the blessed work of heralding the glad tidings to the great and wicked city.

It was a fruitful soil in which to sow the seed of saving truth. There were here the rushing throngs of men busy in the chase of riches and pleasures There were here the struggles and trials, the failures and disappointments,—the scaling of dizzy heights and plunging into dismal depths,—of commercial life Tired humanity was here stooping under the burden of sins and sorrows, groaning ever for deliverance, and ready to respond with gladness to the gracious call, that sounded forth in silver notes through all that babel-din,—"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" The power of the Gospel was manifested, not alone among the moral and decent worshipers of the synagogue, but also and especially among the lowest and most abandoned of that licentious city,—among "the fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revelers and extortioners" "Such," says Paul, as he reminds them later, "were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Verse 5 The boldest preachers are emboldened by the presence and support of believing comrades —Vs 5b Testimony is more than argument, Paul could say, "I know the Nazarene is the Messiah"—Vs 6 Sometimes it is fitting the last word should be spoken the voice of Gospel grace will not cease to sound, till we have ceased to hear —Vs 6b The fearful doom of those whose blood rests upon their own heads —Vs 10 "I am with thee," an echo of "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"—Vs 10b The Lord knows and arranges to gather His own

Vs. 5 PAUL AT CORINTH.

I The downcast apostle
II The constraining word
III The witness to the word —(*Maclaren, Rev Dr Alexander*)

Vss 9–10 CHEER FOR THE WORKER

I The tendency of our weakness
II The calling of our faith
III The encouragement of our service —(*Spurgeon, Rev Charles*)

Vss 9–10 PAUL'S FOURTH VISION

I The Saviour's declaration
II The Saviour's command
III The Saviour's promise —(*The Homilist*)

Vss 9–10 THE LORD COMFORTING PAUL

I A Divine encouragement
II A Divine command
III A Divine promise
IV A Divine revelation of secret truth —(*Weitbrecht, Rev J J*)

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3. *The arrest and release,—vss 12–17.*

Paul had decided to let the Jews alone, and he found a joyful service in ministering to the Gentiles, and bringing to them the message of a Messiah-Saviour. But the Jews were not willing to let Paul alone. They would not accept the Nazarene as their Saviour themselves, nor were they willing that the Gentiles should accept Him. With the specious charge of introducing an unlawful

religion, they brought Paul before the Proconsul, and thought to silence him with the strong arm of the Roman law. The Proconsul of Achaia at this time was Gallio, the brother of the philosopher Seneca, who, in allusion to his supercilious manners, calls him "My Lord Gallio" Proud Roman as he was, the Proconsul was shrewd enough to see that the Jews were only making a pretext of their charge against Paul, and that they had really no case against him. He would not therefore hear them. He had no mind to sit as judge between warring factions of quarrelsome Jews, as he esteemed them. And so he drove them from the judgment-seat. And even the lawlessness of the resulting assault upon the Jewish leader was unnoticed by the indifferent and ease-loving judge. "Gallio cared for none of these things." Had he been willing to adjudge the case brought before him, Gallio might have found that Paul was not only no criminal, but that he was a messenger of life to his soul.

Verse 15 "Questions about words and names" sometimes have more underneath than appears on the surface There were some things here worth Gallio's investigation—Vs 17 One who will not examine into the claims of his Divine Lord is not likely to mete out even-handed justice to his fellow-men—Vs 17b Indifferentism is a great foe to conversion

Vs 17 INDIFFERENCE IN RELIGION.

I The fact.
II The causes
III Some of the means of cure—(*Hallock, Rev Dr. G B. F.*)

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4. *The return to Jerusalem and Antioch,—vss. 18–22.*

The incidents of this return are briefly recorded but interesting. Aquila and Priscilla, and apparently Silas and Timothy, accompanied Paul, the two first named as far as Ephesus only,—the exigencies of trade probably leading them to transfer their tent-making to Asia Minor. The company sailed from Cenchreæ directly across the Ægean Sea to Ephesus. Before sailing Paul shaved his head because he had a vow. It is vain to speculate about this unusual incident in Paul's experience, as we do not and

cannot know anything of the nature of the obligation, or the occasion or circumstances under which the vow was assumed.

Paul tarried but a little while in Ephesus, during which, "as his manner was," he "reasoned with the Jews" in their synagogue, doubtless bringing to them his one great message. Leaving Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus, and purposing to return to the city again if the Lord willed, he sailed away for Cæsarea, hastening to Jerusalem, possibly to complete his vow, perhaps to keep an approaching feast A feast is mentioned in the Authorized Version, but omitted in the Revision If it was to be at a feast it was probably that of Pentecost, as Paul could hardly have reached Jerusalem from Corinth between the opening of navigation, the middle of March, and the date of the Passover

Accompanied by his old comrade, Barnabas, perhaps from Cyprus or Cæsarea, possibly from Corinth, and Titus also (as we learn from Galatians 2 1), in addition to Silas and Timothy, Paul landed at Cæsarea, and, going up to Jerusalem, "saluted the Church" The silence of Luke as to any details of this fourth visit of the apostle to Jerusalem is inexplicable Paul certainly had wondrous tidings to tell the Mother-Church of the triumphs of the Gospel in the cities of Macedonia and Achaia We can hardly believe that Paul, full of such news, could have contented himself with only the quiet fulfillment of his vow, and a brief, if courteous, salutation of his brethren, and then slipping away to Antioch But the Spirit of inspiration has not thought it important or necessary to dwell here upon the story the apostle brought home. As a matter of fact, Jerusalem was rapidly filling up the cup of her iniquity, and in less than twenty years was to be overthrown. She was already losing her place and importance as a center of Christian life and activity, and her crown as the Mother-Church Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome rose in succession to the seat of power and influence, from which Jerusalem was being deposed. And so we have the tantalizingly brief record,—"He went up, and saluted the Church, and went down to Antioch"

The brevity of this record is compensated by the apostle's own narrative in the second chapter of Galatians Paul's first visit to Jerusalem, after his conversion, was probably in A D 40. "The fourteen years after" of Galatians 2 1 would bring him to A. D. 54, the probable year of his return from the second missionary journey,

which return Luke here dismisses in such a summary manner. Supplementing the history from the epistle, the following points are clear, viz —(1) Barnabas and Titus went with Paul up to Jerusalem at the close of the second missionary journey,—the company probably including also Silas and Timothy;—(2) The missionaries had a full and free conference with the chief brethren in the Church at Jerusalem, the result of which was the cordial approval of the evangelists' course, and a mutual agreement as to their fields of labor, Paul and his company taking the Gentiles, and the other brethren their kinsmen of the House of Israel,—(3) There was an effort made by the Judaizing brethren to compel the circumcision of Titus, who was a Greek,—to which demand Paul "gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour" This difference of opinion among brethren, and the possibility of greater trouble arising out of it, may have led Paul to cut short his stay in Jerusalem, and to hasten his journey down to Antioch

And so ended the second missionary journey It must have been nearly if not quite four years since Paul and Silas left Antioch According to many writers this second missionary journey was begun in the spring of the year A D 51. Paul seems to have begun his missionary journeys always in the spring of the year —and indeed the mountain passes of Asia Minor were hardly passable much before the last of May or first of June And, considering what they did and the places they visited, it seems likely that they were a year and a half in going from Antioch to Corinth, which city they reached in the autumn of A D 52 And, as the Corinthian ministry lasted eighteen months, it must have been the spring of A D. 54 when they returned to Jerusalem and Antioch

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Verse 18 The fulfilment of vows is not to be set aside, even because of a journey—Vs 19 Doing good by the way, opening the door for his return, and for a great work in Ephesus, was a part of Paul's wise plan

SECTION 4—THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL AND HIS COMPANIONS —THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY,—18 23——21 16

SUB-SECTION 1—*Galatia and Phrygia Revisited,—vs 23*

23 And, having spent some time there, he departed, and went through the region of Galatia, and Phrygia, in order, establishing all the disciples

1 *The Places,—vs 23* 2 *The Object,—vs 23c.* 3 *The Itinerary—vs 23b*

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1. *The Places,—vs. 23.*

Accurate maps of the region thus visited and summarily referred to are difficult of construction In general it may be said Pisidia is north of Pamphylia, and Lycaonia north of Cilicia; while Galatia is north of Lycaonia, and Phrygia west of Lycaonia and Galatia. Phrygia and Galatia, therefore, may be taken as embracing the central and elevated region of Asia Minor The rivers Hermus and Mæander, emptying westward into the Ægean Sea,—the Halys and Sangarius, running north into the Euxine or Black Sea,—and the Cestrus and Eurymedon and other smaller streams flowing south into the Sea of Pamphylia, or Mediterranean,—all take their rise in these mountain ranges and high table-lands of Galatia and Phrygia It was a region with which Paul's travels had made him familiar In order to reach it he must have re-traversed the road, over four hundred miles in length, from Antioch to the Cilician Gates The same great highway would have led him through Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch,—though he may have turned off northward after passing through the Gates, and gone via Tyana directly into Galatia and Phrygia. Paul seems to have been accompanied by both Timothy and Titus, and possibly also by Gaius, Aristarchus, and Erastus, though these last three may have met him at Ephesus.

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2 *The Object,—vs 23c*

The aim of the missionaries throughout these regions was to confirm the Churches already founded, and to strengthen them in the faith, and in the exercise of every Christian grace, and especially of benevolence It was on this tour that Paul everywhere made arrangements for the systematic collection of the contributions of the Churches for the poor saints in Judea To him it must have been deeply interesting to revisit the region of his serious breakdown in health, and to meet again the brethren, who had mani-

fested such affectionate concern for their invalid teacher. And he sought everywhere to enlist their sympathy and interest, not in his own behalf, but of their poorer brethren in Jerusalem and Judea. He refers to this in his letter to the Corinthians,—See 1 Cor. 16:1.

Verse 23c Confirming recent converts and strengthening the Churches, as we have seen elsewhere, is not less important than the work of evangelization The Judaizing errorists were abroad, and needed to be checkmated, and their influence nullified The benevolence of the Churches needed to be developed This Paul had been enjoined to do (Gal 2 10), and this, as he claimed, he had been always forward to do (1 Cor 16·1)

SUB-SECTION 2—*Apollos,—vss 24-28*

24 Now a certain Jew, named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus, and he was mighty in the Scriptures

25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and, being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately

27 And when he was minded to pass over into Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him and when he was come, he helped them much that had believed through grace, 28 for he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ

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1. *His nativity,—vs 24* 2 *His Ephesian ministry,—vs 25* 3 *His being taught by Priscilla and Aquila,—vs 26* 4. *His ministry in the city of Corinth,—vss 27-28.*

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1. *His nativity,—vs 24*

Apollos was born in Alexandria, the third, if not the second, city in the Roman Empire. It was a city equally renowned for its wealth, culture and learning. Its schools of philosophy and eloquence were famous the world over. For centuries it had been noted for the number of Jews among its citizens, and for the honorable and influential place accorded to them. In Paul's day there

were probably almost as many Jews in Alexandria as there were in Jerusalem. Many of them had been accustomed to attend the feasts in Jerusalem; and doubtless some of them had become disciples of John. And through some of them it seems likely that Apollos had come to look for the Messiah, of whose coming John's ministry had been the herald and forerunner.

Verse 24. The interests of individual souls are not lost in the mighty marching of the kingdom of God

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2 *His Ephesian ministry,—vs 25.*

We are not told what brought Apollos to Ephesus There was constant commercial intercourse between Egypt and Ionia, across the waters of the eastern Mediterranean, and through some such channel this eloquent and learned Jew of Alexandria was guided by "a wise, holy, and tender Providence" to the city of Ephesus. He was "mighty in the Scriptures", and being fervent in spirit he preached to his Jewish co-religionists "the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John" This latter statement needs some explanation; and the most satisfactory explanation appears to be this, viz —The ministry of John the Baptist was divided into two well-defined periods The first was a time of awakening, the sounding of an alarm, and calling the people to repentance, summoning them to prepare for the impending kingdom of God The second and later period was marked by the proclamation of the actual presence of the Messiah, as, at the fords of the Jordan, the Forerunner, pointing to Jesus as He walked, cried out to the multitude, "Behold the Lamb of God."

We can hardly believe that Apollos knew anything of this second part of John's preaching. Had he known it, he would surely have found his way to Jerusalem, to learn there "the way of the Lord more perfectly." He evidently knew only of the baptism of repentance, and John's call to prepare "the way of the Lord" This he knew and taught accurately, "speaking boldly in the synagogue," after the pattern of the shaggy-mantled preacher of the wilderness. But the learned and eloquent preacher, "mighty in the Scriptures,"

needed to be more fully taught himself: and the teachers divinely provided were at hand.

Verse 24b Scriptural knowledge, eloquent speech, and fervency of spirit are prime requisites in a missionary of the Cross Accurate knowledge, even though partial, is a good foundation for further attainments

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3. *He is taught by Priscilla and Aquila,—vs 26b.*

We have here another illustration of that prodigal use of opulent resources, which sent Philip to the desert road to meet Candace's Treasurer, and guided Paul from Antioch to Philippi to meet Lydia the seller of purple, brought over from Thyatira to hear the messenger of peace on a foreign shore The tent-makers from Rome are carried to Ephesus via Corinth, to be the messengers of grace and life to the learned and eloquent Apollos, whom Divine Providence had brought up from his native city Alexandria, to learn from them "the way of God more accurately" These humble artisans, who had so greatly helped and comforted Paul in Corinth, were not apparently gifted with eloquent speech, but they had been taught of the Divine Spirit, and they knew far more of the way of the Lord than their learned and brilliant pupil

This association of Apollos with Priscilla and Aquila is deeply interesting His knowledge was accurate and influential as far as it went. He was mighty in the Scriptures, and knew the fulness of the times was come, and that Messiah's day was at hand He knew of John as the Lord's Forerunner, and his summons to repentance, and to prepare the way of the Lord These things he knew, and these things he preached with great cogency and power But beyond this his knowledge did not go They were therefore wonderful truths which were brought to his attention by the lowly tent-makers. The actual advent of the Messiah, His life and death, His resurrection and ascension, and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost,—a series of marvelous events were these, whose connected doctrines so wonderfully fitted into the truths which Apollos already held and taught that he accepted them immediately and without reserve He was now prepared in the

fullest measure to be an evangelist of the glad tidings,—a missionary of the Cross to those who were sitting in heathen darkness.

Verse 26a Boldness of spirit and speech is essential in a preacher of the truth—Vs 26b The ablest teachers are the humblest learners—Vs 26c Those not gifted in public speech may be most useful teachers in private life.

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4 *His ministry in Corinth,—vss 27–28.*

Apollos does not seem to have preached in Ephesus after he had been made more fully acquainted with "the way of God" It is not easy to say why It is thought by some that he shrank from making known the defect of his knowledge where he had so recently appeared so confident and bold It is more likely that he had heard of the coming of the large force of missionaries in Paul's company, and knew that his services would not any longer be needed Just at this time also the state of the Corinthian Church was such as to call for the presence of a bold and able leader

And so, with the encouragement and commendation of Aquila and Priscilla and others, he crossed over to Achaia, and greatly helped those who, through the grace of God, had come to believe He followed also in the footsteps of Paul and turned with earnestness and longing to his Jewish kindred It was a more fruitful field than Athens, but we have reason to believe that he was no more successful than Paul in winning many of his countrymen to "the truth as it is in Jesus" But "he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" He became also mightily influential with the disciples in Corinth, and was numbered by them with Paul and Peter among the great leaders of the Church, though doubtless he gave no countenance to the formation of parties in that Church, and was not pleased with the rallying cries,—"I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ" And he left them after a brief ministry, and came to Ephesus, while Paul was yet there

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Verse 27 It is always through Divine Grace that we are able to believe Faith is the gift of God—Vs 28 Confuting, convincing, and con-

verting, three steps, of which the last alone is effective—28b All faithful preaching must be grounded on, and be backed by Holy Scripture—Vs. 28b The sum of all apostolic testimony is that Jesus the Nazarene is the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

Vss. 24–28. Apollos

I His superior Biblical knowledge
II His effective power of expression.
III His fine attributes of spirit
IV His varied capacity for usefulness—(*The Homilist*)

Vs 24. Mighty in the Scriptures

I The nature
II The importance } of becoming "mighty in the Scriptures"
III The duty
(*Hodge, Rev Dr Charles*)

Vss 24–26 The Character and Conditions of Usefulness.

I General culture and discipline
II Aptitude
III. Capacity for earnest, zealous exertion
IV An inquisitive and docile spirit—(*Smith, Rev Pres't Worthington*)

Sub-section 3—*The Awakening at Ephesus,—19 1–20*

1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples· 2 and he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given 3 And he said, Into what, then, were ye baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism 4 And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on Him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus 5 And when they heard this they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus 6 And, when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied

7 And they were in all about twelve men 8 And he entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God

9 But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus 10 And this continued for

the space of two years, so that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks 11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul; 12 insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out

13 But certain also of the strolling Jews, exorcists, took upon them to name over them that had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth 14 And there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, who did this 15 And the evil spirit answered, and said unto them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house, naked and wounded 17 And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, that dwelt at Ephesus, and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified

18 Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds 19 And not a few of them that practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all, and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver 20 So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed

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1 *The Divine source of it,—vs. 2* 2 *The doctrinal foundation of it,—vs 20 21* 3 *The small beginning of it,—vs 7* 4 *The opposition to it,—vs 9.* 5 *The counterfeiting of it,—vss 13–15* 5 *The genuine character of it,—vss 18–20*

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1. *The Divine source of it,—vs 2.*

It is deeply interesting to note the thoughts with which the apostle's mind was filled as he began his evangelizing work in the various cities visited by the missionary forces We have no clue to these thoughts in many instances. But in two cases we are well advised. We know Paul's thoughts in entering upon the missionary propaganda in two great and dissolute cities of the heathen world,—Corinth and Ephesus It was apparently while crossing the Isthmus, and approaching Corinth, that he formed the noble resolution not to know anything in that great fortress of Satan "save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." And as he came down to Ephesus from the "upper country," the table-lands of Phrygia and Galatia, and as he wrought with his own hands for daily bread, he was evidently thinking of the Holy Spirit. And so it came about

that when he met the imperfectly instructed disciples, who possibly had been taught by Apollos, in the days preceding his own more perfect enlightenment, the thought of his heart comes to the surface in the first question emerging from his lips, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? Paul's question, Into what then were ye baptized? is an incidental testimony to the prevalence and understanding of Christian baptism into the Triune Name. But these disciples, like their putative teacher, knew only the baptism of John They knew from John's preaching that the Coming One, whose forerunner he was, would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire; but they know not yet that the Holy Spirit had been actually given. Then, being more fully instructed by Paul, and baptized in the name of Jesus, with the laying on of the apostle's hands they received the Holy Spirit, and spake with tongues and prophesied.

It was the beginning of a gracious work of the Divine Spirit

Verse 2 The burden of every Pastor's heart should be that his people might receive the Holy Spirit It is important to explain the nature, mission, and work of the Holy Spirit, that the Church may be moved to pray for His presence and power, but beyond this no minister of the Gospel is called upon to preach the Holy Spirit His mission is to preach Christ crucified, and to call men to repentance and faith in the atoning Saviour This preaching pleases the Holy Spirit Himself, and this preaching He will always bless

Vss 1-20 THE AWAKENING AT EPHESUS

I The Divine source of it
II The doctrinal foundation of it
III The small beginning of it
IV The opposition to it
V The counterfeiting of it
VI The genuine character of it

Vss 1-2 FAITH IN THE HOLY GHOST

I Implies an habitual sense of the reality of a spiritual and supernatural world
II It escapes a materialized estimate of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ
III. It rescues us from a merely earthly and materialized estimate of the Christian Church
IV It preserves us from a materialized worship
V It implies a correspondent elevation of character

(Liddon, Rev Canon)

Vs 2 WHITSUNDAY.

I We want the Holy Spirit as the minister of healing
II Also as the minister of witnessing
III Also as the minister that assimilates to the divine likeness
IV Also as the minister of hope
V Also as the minister of comfort —(*The Homilist*)

Vs 1 THE CONDITIONS OF RECEIVING THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

I There must be a realizing knowledge that God wants to give us His Holy Spirit
II There must be an intense desire in our souls for the possession of the Spirit of God with His power
III All antagonistic things must be eliminated from our lives, and everything must be put in subordination to the Spirit He must be allowed to direct us, we cannot direct Him

(*Gregg, Rev Dr David*)

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2 *The doctrinal foundation of it,—vs 20 21.*

Paul's heart was turning to the Holy Spirit, and doubtless he would have his brethren seek His presence and power But Paul did not preach the Holy Spirit His ministry in Ephesus, as later he tells the elders, consisted largely in "testifying both to Jews and Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" As he called the literati of Athens to repentance in view of the coming judgment, so here "publicly and from house to house" he summoned the Ephesians to repentance of sin, in the sight of God, and to faith in the crucified, risen, and glorified Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth

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Verse 20 21 The grand theme of the Christian minister must ever be this:—Reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God

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3 *The small human beginning of it,—vs 7*

Twelve men formed the nucleus of the Church at Ephesus We are not told what had become of Aquila and Priscilla They do not appear again in Luke's narrative They send salutations

to the brethren in Corinth in Paul's first letter to that Church; and this letter is supposed to have been written near the close of the Ephesian ministry,—about the time of the Passover in the spring of A. D. 57. Later in the history they had evidently returned to Rome, for Paul sends them greetings in his letter to the Romans, written from Corinth probably in the winter of A. D 57-58. Still later they appear to have returned to Ephesus, whither apparently Paul sends them greetings in his last letter (2 Tim 4:19) Their life was evidently a peripatetic life; and impelled by the necessities of their business they moved about frequently They may not have been at Ephesus when Paul returned to the city on that third missionary journey. The making and selling of tents may have carried them temporarily away from the great city, and out upon some of the many caravan routes throughout the Asiatic provinces. So only these presumable disciples were in the city to greet the Pauline evangelists It seemed a little company with which to begin the great awakening of the mighty capital But the conquest of the world began with twelve men, chiefly fishermen of Galilee It is never too much to expect that twelve men filled with the Spirit of God may shake to its foundations the most godless city on the face of the earth.

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4. *The opposition to it,—vss 9-12.*

Paul pursued the same course in Ephesus that he had followed in Corinth. He went into the synagogue, and for the space of three months fulfilled his ministry, "reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God" It was the old theme presented in the old way. The true nature of the Messianic kingdom, its spiritual character and mission among men, and the life of the Messiah as a sufferer and a sacrifice, and the certainty that Jesus of Nazareth was the prophesied Messiah-Saviour,—this was Paul's message to the worshippers in the synagogue, as it had ever been elsewhere. His manner of preaching also was the same. "He reasoned and persuaded,"—how cogent the reasoning and how earnest the persuasion it is not difficult for us to imagine

But the result of Paul's efforts to reach his countrymen did not differ from his previous experiences in other places. Some be-

lieved and accepted the truth; but others "were hardened and disobedient, and began to speak evil of the Way before the multitude." And we have again the sad spectacle of the children of the covenant blinding themselves to their own mercy, and setting themselves in array against that which should have received their heartiest support.

But Paul had ceased all controversy with his fellow-Jews With a sore, sad heart he turned away from them, while his spirit yearned over them, and departing from the synagogue he separated the disciples from them, and in the spring of A D. 55 found a place for their daily assemblies in the school of Tyrannus, where he continued to reason with and persuade men Here for two years the missionaries of the Cross so faithfully and diligently pursued their evangelistic ministry, that "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" Here also the Lord honored His servant with special healing powers, and He, who made Peter's shadow efficacious as a healing medium, invested articles of apparel from Paul's body with therapeutic powers, so that the sick were healed, and the demons were cast out

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Verse 9 The two-fold influence of faithful preaching, it is a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death Hearts are either softened or hardened —Vs 10 The wisdom of massing evangelistic forces in the centers of population —Vss 11-12a The unlikely instruments of healing power, which God sometimes chooses for the manifestation of His Mercy —Vs 12b Works of mercy preeminently show forth the Divine character

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5 *The counterfeiting of it,—vss 13–17.*

This is the refuge of a foiled opposition When Satan finds himself unable to withstand a work of grace, his next and sometimes most successful effort will be to discredit the Lord's work by counterfeiting it It was so at Ephesus The Adversary found fitting instruments for his purpose in some strolling Jews, who made pretentions to exorcisms and such like dealings with the spirit-world They found a congenial home in Ephesus, where every form and device of magic and the black arts flourished. A priest, Sceva by name, with his seven sons were adepts in dealing with

their so-called supernatural powers Two of the sons were instigated of the Evil One to seek to discredit Paul's miraculous powers by some exorcisms of their own They failed. As Jannes and Jambres withstanding Moses in the court of Pharaoh came to a point where their power was weakness, and they could only say, "This is the finger of God,"—Here is the true supernatural; so the sons of Sceva were soon taught the shallowness of their knowledge and the weakness of their power in the presence of the demon they sought to control but could not Their failure became conspicuous, and the final result was a great advance in the extension of the kingdom of Christ

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Verse 15 The knowledge of evil spirits,—they know and recognize the power of God and His Eternal Son, and they thoroughly understand human nature, the demon could truthfully say, "I know Jesus, and I understand Paul"

Vs 15 THE APPEAL OF EVIL SPIRITS TO THE SONS OF SCEVA

I Hell knows and respects Christ and His true followers
II Hell despises and takes vengeance on religious pretenders.

(*The Homilist*)

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6 *The genuine character of it,—vss. 18–20.*

In the city preeminently given over to pretended supernatural powers and communications, this awakening at Ephesus received incontrovertible evidences of its Divine origin "Fear fell upon all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified" The triumph of the Gospel was conspicuously manifested in three particulars,—(1) In the abandonment of wicked leadership many who had sought to deceive their fellowmen ceased their diabolism,—(2) In the hearty confession of their sins. they came confessing and declaring their deeds,—(3) In self-denying reform· "Not a few of them that practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all" It was a great and mighty victory for the truth as it is in Jesus They counted the price of their holocaust, and found it "fifty thousand pieces of silver," or nearly $10,000, or as money now goes, compared with then, about $50,000.

Verse 19 The acceptance of Jesus separates men from all deeds of darkness —Vs 20 No sacrifice is too great for one who truly loves the Lord Jesus Christ

Vs 19 THE BURNING OF THE MAGICAL BOOKS

I The true convert must not rest satisfied with any evidence but that of a great moral change
II He must show a like zeal in avoiding the scenes and occasions of temptations
III Genuine converts will be earnest in seeking the conversion of others, —as, by burning the books, these would prevent their being a temptation to others —(*Melvill, Rev Dr Henry*)

Vs 19 THE BURNING BOOKS

I Avoid all those books which give false portraitures of human life
II Avoid all those books which, while they have good in them, have also a large admixture of evil
III Avoid all books that corrupt the imagination, and arouse the base passions
IV Avoid all books which are apologetic of crime

(*Talmage, Rev Dr T DeWitt*)

SUB-SECTION 4—"*Diana of the Ephesians,'—vss 21–41*

21 Now, after these things were ended, Paul purposed in spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there I must also see Rome 22 And, having sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while

23 And about that time there arose "no small stir concerning the Way" 24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no little business to the craftsmen, 25 whom he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this business we have our wealth 26 And ye see and hear, that not alone in Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they are no gods that are made with hands 27 and not only is there danger that this our trade come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana be made of no account, and that she should even be deposed from her magnificence, whom all Asia and the world worshipeth

28 When they heard this they were filled with wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians, 29 and the city was filled with confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, having seized Gaius

and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel. 30 And when Paul was minded to enter in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. 31 And certain also of the Asiarchs, being his friends, sent unto him and besought him not to adventure himself into the theater 32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another for the assembly was in confusion, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together 33 And they brought Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made a defence unto the people 34 But when they perceived that he was a Jew, all with one voice, about the space of two hours, cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians

35 And when the town-clerk had quieted the multitude, he saith, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there who knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is temple-keeper of the great Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be gainsaid, ye ought to be quiet, and do nothing rash 37 For ye have brought hither these men, who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess 38 If, therefore, Demetrius and the craftsmen that are with him have a matter against any man, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls let them accuse one another. 39 But if ye seek anything about other matters, it shall be settled in the regular assembly 40 For indeed we are in danger to be accused concerning this day's riot, there being no cause for it and, as touching it, we shall not be able to give account of this concourse 41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly

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1 Paul's plans and helpers,—vss 21–22 2 Demetrius, the silversmith,—vss 23–27. 3 The riotous assembly,—vss. 28–34 4 The town-clerk of Ephesus,—vss 35–41

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1. *Paul's plans and helpers,—vss. 21–22.*

In the journey from Corinth to Ephesus, Paul had been accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, and by Timothy and perhaps Silas, as well as possibly by Erastus, Gaius and Aristarchus. Silas disappears from Luke's narrative at Corinth, after he had come down from Macedonia to that city in answer to Paul's urgent message It seems probable that he continued with Paul till he reached Jerusalem, whence he had been sent forth with Judas Barsabbas, to carry the letter of the Council down to Antioch We hear of him no more in the New Testament history, except possibly in Peter's first letter (5:12), if indeed the reference there is to the same person, of which in the minds of some writers there is a little doubt. The other brethren named, Erastus, Gaius, and Aristarchus,

were with Paul at Ephesus; but it is not clear whether they accompanied him to Jerusalem and Antioch, in the return from the second missionary journey, and later started out with him on the third and last evangelistic tour, or whether they met him at Ephesus,—awaiting there his coming down from "the upper country."

After the great awakening had reached its climax in the holocaust of the black-art books, Paul began immediately to plan an extension of his missionary journey The evangelistic deputation had been very busy and greatly blessed It was apparently during Paul's years in Ephesus that the Churches of Colossæ, Laodicea, Thyatira, and others of the apocalyptic seven were founded: and while Paul seems not to have visited them himself, being occupied in the great city, his coadjutors probably carried the "glad tidings" through all the province of Asia,—assisting those who, converted in Ephesus, became messengers of life to their friends and neighbors

And Paul was planning also to revisit the scenes of his first labors in Europe, and, in anticipation of his own speedy coming, he sent forward Timothy and Erastus to visit the Churches of Macedonia He chose to keep Gaius and Aristarchus with him still. And Paul's master mind was also planning a longer journey. After passing through Macedonia and Achaia, it was his purpose to return the fifth time to Jerusalem And "after I have been there," he says, "I must also see Rome" And even Rome did not circumscribe the boundary of his comprehensive scheme, for we know, from his letter to the Romans, written probably a few months later from Corinth, that he purposed going far beyond the Imperial City, to carry the Gospel into Spain. Paul's plan was swallowed up in the larger plan of his Divine Master He says, "I *must* see Rome;" the Lord's "must" differ's from Paul's, but it brings him to the same end,—"Thou *must* stand before Cæsar." But Paul's work was not yet done in Ephesus.

Verse 21 Paul's plan and God's plan,—God meant that Paul should see Rome, but not as Paul was hoping to see it Paul's anxiety to revisit Jerusalem was once more to carry "alms and offerings to my nation" Thus would he show his obedience to the apostles and elders, and his love to his Jewish brethren.

2. Demetrius the silversmith,—vss 23-27.

There came to be "no small stir concerning the Way." Demetrius was the instigator of the commotion, but he charged the mischief upon Paul He was a maker of silver shrines of the goddess Diana. These were wholesaled to the trade; and by the craftsmen retailed and distributed throughout the city and province, and perhaps adjoining provinces But this business was being seriously affected by the success of the Christian missionaries And Demetrius appeals to the self-interests of his business associates,—If this Paul is allowed to go on, our business is going to be ruined But Demetrius is as crafty as the owners of the pythoness in Philippi The business of both was endamaged, but to the public the chief concern was not their financial loss, but the damage to religion There is danger that our trade may come into disrepute, but more than this, the temple of the great goddess Diana may be made of no account, and even she, whom all Asia and the world worshipeth, may be deposed from her magnificence

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Verse 23 The "stir" is here transferred from the black-arts men to the silversmiths The power of money to hinder the Gospel

Vs 26 DEMETRIUS

I The triumphs of the Gospel, according to Demetrius, involved a religious revolution
II These triumphs were undeniable facts
III They were not confined to particular types of men
IV They were achieved by the agency of man as man—(*The Homilist*)

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3. The riotous assembly,—vss. 28-34.

The speech of the silversmith was a very crafty one And it accomplished the end he desired All the people, whose business was in jeopardy, and all the devotees of Diana, were stirred up and filled with wrath The whole city was thrown into confusion. The multitudes rushed with one accord into the theater,—which was a vast structure, amphitheatrical in shape, with stone seats covered with marble, and furnishing accommodations for thirty thousand

people. Here the tumultuous crowd hurriedly gathered, on the way seizing Paul's companions, Gaius and Aristarchus,—probably hoping through them to get hold of their leader, and subsequently releasing them when this plan failed. And here the howling mob, insensate and unmanageable, gave way to a delirium of passionate outcry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." For over two hours the unceasing frenzy swept over those marble seats, and shook the canopying curtains that shut them in from the vault of heaven. Alexander (possibly the coppersmith who did Paul much harm, 2 Tim. 4:14) endeavored to reach the ear of the multitudes, the Jews themselves putting him forward, perhaps that he might for himself and his countrymen disavow all connection with and responsibility for the teachings of the renegade and apostate Saul of Tarsus. But the mob would not hear him, and drowned his voice in their unceasing cry. Paul himself, brave and intrepid soul, was minded to confront the furious foe, but some of his friends among the Asiarchs,—the ten men annually chosen to superintend their great spring festivals,—besought him not to adventure himself into the theater. The counsel was doubtless wise. He would certainly have been torn in pieces by the pitiless mob as soon as he should be recognized. And still the lord of misrule reigned supreme. Pandemonium had broken loose, and the tumultuous shouting of the multitudes, most of whom knew not why they were there, continued to salute the arches of the sky.

Verse 31. The unreasoning and pitiless cruelty of the mob.

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4. *The Town-Clerk,—vss. 35–41.*

It was not in human nature to endure the strain of such madness indefinitely. There came a lull in the commotion, and the man for the hour appeared. The City Recorder, as he might be called, now stepped to the front, showing himself a master of men, and an adept in managing a riotous crowd. We cannot but admire the skill with which he accomplished the end he sought;—(1) He placated the assembly by agreeing with their most extravagant devotion to their great goddess Diana, whose temple-keeper their

city was, as everybody knew;—(2) He would have them note that whatever these emissaries of a foreign religion were, they were neither robbers of temples, nor blasphemers of their goddess;—(3) He reminds them that it ought to be understood that there were legal ways, in which aggrieved parties might gain redress. They were living under the reign of law,—of Roman law, there were open courts, and presiding proconsuls. If therefore Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen were endamaged, they were not without remedy. Let them seek that remedy in a lawful way;—For (4) this whole proceeding was unlawful; and they were liable to accusation and punishment for this day's uncalled-for riotous assembly.

And with this solemn pointing to the majesty of the offended law he dismissed the concourse.

Vss 35-41. THE CITY RECORDER

I His fearless courage
II. His admirable tact.
III. His prudent advice.
IV. His impartial justice.
V. His great influence—(*The Homiletical Commentary*)

SUB-SECTION 5—*Macedonia and Achaia revisited,—vss. 20:1-3.*

1 And, after the uproar ceased, Paul, having sent for the disciples and exhorted them, took leave of them, and departed to go into Macedonia

2 And when he had gone through those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece

3 And when he had spent three months there, and a plot was laid against him by the Jews as he was about to sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia

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1 *Going to Macedonia,—vs 1* 2 *Paul's last ministry in Macedonia,—vs. 2.* 3. *Paul's final work in Corinth,—vs 3*

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1. *Going to Macedonia,—vs. 1.*

Luke's record of Paul's second visit to Europe is amazingly brief. The details of it are not by any means as interesting as those of the first; but are of considerable importance. We gather

them from these few verses, and from brief intimations in Paul's letters, and some conjectures, of more or less plausibility. During Paul's ministry in Ephesus, and perhaps as much as a year after he entered the city, he wrote his letter to "the Churches of Galatia," though some writers, basing their judgment chiefly on points of similarity in it to the letter to the Romans, think it was written nearly a year later and from Corinth. This, as we may soon see reason to believe, is not probable And, however it may be, it is all but certain that he wrote his first letter to Corinth from Ephesus, and apparently after "the great awakening," and before the commotion in the theater, which probably occurred in the month of May,—the month specially devoted to festivals in honor of Diana. And, if so, it must have been before the time of the approaching feast of Pentecost, as Paul says to the Corinthians (16 8), "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" His reference to the Passover in the same letter (5 7–8) makes it seem likely that he wrote between the Passover and Pentecost, i e, between April 7th and May 28th,—the dates of those feasts in the year A. D. 57.

This letter Paul seems to have sent to Corinth by the hand of Titus, who was possibly accompanied by Trophimus, an Ephesian, —though it is not so said in Luke's narrative, and Titus, for some inexplicable reason, is not mentioned anywhere in the Acts of the Apostles Paul had sent Timothy and Erastus over into Macedonia, in preparation for his own speedy coming, when they were to go on to Achaia· and now he arranges with Titus to bring him prompt word from Corinth, and meet him at Troas, to which city he himself is about to depart on his way to Europe.

Having made these arrangements, and realizing that his work was now done in the capital of Asia, after the uproar in the theater had subsided Paul once more called together the disciples and comforted them with much exhortation; after which he set out on his projected journey to Macedonia. He probably went by some sailing vessel up the coast, landing at Troas, where he expected tidings of the state of things in Corinth, by the coming of Titus, as had been prearranged. It is possible that Paul left Ephesus a little earlier than he had intended, on account of the outbreak of the craftsmen in the theater. But it is clear that he was dis-

appointed in the failure of Titus to carry out the arrangement he had made. However, he waited for his messenger; and, finding an open door in Troas, he began at once the evangelization of the city.

But he did not remain long in Troas After the departure of Titus he had received unfavorable word from Corinth; and he was much concerned for the Church there, and anxious to learn how the brethren had received his letter He was much troubled also by the inexplicable delay in the coming of Titus He says to the Corinthians afterward (2 Cor. 2 13), "I had no relief for my spirit because I found not Titus my brother: but, taking my leave of them (i e, the brethren in Troas), I went forth into Macedonia" He crossed over to Philippi probably about the first or second week in June; and soon Titus came to him in that city, apparently, and brought such tidings as greatly relieved his anxieties. Timothy, as we shall soon see, seems to have returned with Titus, while Erastus, holding an important official position in the city, remained in Corinth

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Verse 1 The care of the Churches is a vastly important duty of the Christian ministry Soundness of doctrine and purity of life in the Church should be their unceasing concern Waiting times are not to be idle times

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2 *Paul's last ministry in Macedonia,—vs 2*

The apostle's mind was set at rest by the news which Titus and Timothy brought, but he did not think it wise or best to go down to Corinth till after some time had elapsed His delay would afford the Church an opportunity to correct the abuses and introduce the reforms called for in his letter from Ephesus Meanwhile he seems to have visited the Macedonian Churches founded six or seven years before Then, thinking the time propitious, from some point in Macedonia he wrote a second letter to the Church of Corinth, joining his beloved Timothy with himself in friendly greeting,—an evidence that Timothy had returned from Achaia This letter Paul sent, using Titus again as his messenger: who seems to have been accompanied by Luke, that they two might attend to the

making up of the contributions of the Church for the poor saints in Judea.

Many writers suppose, with much plausibility, that Paul, after dispatching this letter with Titus, spent the late summer and autumn of A. D. 57 in evangelizing Macedonia Quarta Their reason for this supposition may be briefly stated,—Paul had already proclaimed the Gospel in Macedonia Prima, i e, at Philippi,—and in Macedonia Secunda, i e, at Thessalonica,—and in Macedonia Tertia i e, at Berœa, but, being compelled to flee from Berœa, he had not been able to visit Macedonia Quarta, i e, toward Dalmatia on the northwest, "round about unto Illyricum" But Paul, in his letter to the Romans, claims to have already done this, so that "there being now no more place in these parts" he was ready to visit Rome As these words were written a few months later from Corinth, it would seem as if this were the only time in which the completion of the evangelization of Macedonia could have been accomplished

When this was done Paul probably returned by the Via Egnatia to Thessalonica, as the most convenient port from which to sail to Cenchreæ Luke dismisses this summer and autumn's work and voyage in a single verse, "And when he had gone through those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece"

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3 *Paul's final work in Corinth,—vs 3*

The apostle reached the capital of Achaia about the middle of December A D 57 The navigation of the open sea had indeed been suspended some months before, but vessels doubtless still continued in the coasting trade at least at infrequent intervals, and by one of these, as the shortest though most dangerous way, Paul found his way down to Cenchreæ Of the apostle's work in Corinth Luke says only that he spent three months there We must learn what he did while there from other sources We may take it for granted that some of his time was given to "setting things in order" This he proposed to do in the letter of the preceding spring (1 Cor 11 34b) That he did not spare the troublers of the Church, and the defamers of his own good name, and the despisers of his apostolic authority, we may well believe.

But one of the principal things, which occupied Paul's mind during those winter months in Corinth, was the writing of his great letter to the Church of Rome. Some say he wrote here also the letter to the Churches of Galatia, and base their judgment on the fact that both letters deal with the fundamenal doctrine of justification by faith. But in favor of the simultaneous authorship of Corinthians and Galatians, both of which we believe were written from Ephesus in the spring of A. D. 57, it must be noted that Paul in both makes an earnest and most vigorous defence of his apostolic authority; and of this there is not a whisper in the letter to the Romans. Furthermore, it was now nearly four years since he visited the Galatian region But his letter to these Churches bears the marks of a recent visit. Paul wrote it with his own hands, and in uncouth characters necessitated by his purblind vision The letter to Rome was written by the hand of Tertius, an amanuensis That it was written from Corinth is proved by the letter itself. Paul was a guest of the generous and believing Gaius while writing the epistle; and Gaius sends his salutations to his brethren in Rome in the letter (Rom 16·23). The composition of such a masterpiece of reasoning and exhortation might well take all the apostle's spare time in that three months' sojourn in Corinth It seems to have been sent to Rome by the hand of Phœbe, a deaconess of the Church in Cenchreæ, who was visiting the Imperial Capital on other business.

Verses 2–3 The missionary's summer and winter call for unceasing work, but each a different kind of work With Paul a summer of evangelizing in the mountains of northwestern Macedonia is fittingly followed by a winter of study and writing by the quiet shore and in the great city

SUB-SECTION 6—*The return journey,—vss. 20·4——21 16.*

(a) *Incidents en route,—vss 4–16.*

4 And there accompanied him, as far as Asia, Sopater of Berœa, the son of Pyrrhus; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus 5 But these had gone before, and were waiting for us at Troas 6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; and we tarried seven days

7 And, upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together

to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber where we were gathered together 9 And there sat in the window a certain young man named Eutychus, borne down with deep sleep; and, as Paul discoursed yet longer, being borne down by his sleep, he fell down from the third story, and was taken up dead. 10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and, embracing him, said, Make ye no ado; for his life is in him 11 And when he had gone up, and had broken the bread, and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. 12 And they brought the lad alive, and were not a little comforted

13 But we, going before to the ship, set sail for Assos, there intending to take in Paul for so he had appointed, intending himself to go by land 14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him in and came to Mitylene 15 And, sailing from thence, we came the following day over against Chios, and the next day we touched at Samos, and the day after we came to Miletus 16 For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost

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1 *The missionary deputation,—vss 4-6* 2. *The week at Troas* (*Eutychus*), *vss 7-12* 3 *From Troas to Miletus,—vss. 13-16*

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1. *The missionary deputation,—vss. 4-6.*

It had been Paul's purpose to return to Asia by the shortest route practicable, i. e., directly across the Ægean Sea But a plot against his life by the unbelieving Jews led to a sudden change in his plans, and accompanied by a number of his coadjutors he went back to Asia via Macedonia. Luke mentions seven in the company who went ahead to wait for Paul at Troas, while others, at least one, remained with the apostle The historian does not make it clear whether the company divided at Corinth or at Philippi. In view of the activity and malignity of Paul's enemies it does not seem probable that these seven companions of the apostle would have left him to come along through Achaia and Macedonia accompanied only by Luke It is thought, therefore, that the missionary deputation probably remained together till they reached Philippi. There they could leave their beloved leader in the company and protection of his friends So Paul, with Luke, his con-

stant companion henceforth, as is indicated by the personal form of the narrative now once more resumed, remained at Philippi till after "the days of unleavened bread," i e, during the Passover Week Paul's plan before leaving Corinth may have been to spend this week in Jerusalem, but this being no longer possible because of his circuitous route, his desire and hope now are to reach Jerusalem in time for Pentecost His companions were probably sent forward to Troas to complete the work left unfinished by Paul's hasty departure for Macedonia in search of tidings from Corinth by the hand of Titus The Passover Week in the spring of A D 58 ran from March 27th to April 3d,—the latter date being the Monday after "the great day of the feast" Paul and Luke then left Philippi probably on Tuesday, April 4th, and, buffeted by contrary winds, or detained by some other adverse circumstances, were five days in getting across to Troas

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Verses 4-6 A noble band of helpers had been gathered by Paul,—eight men from six different cities,—Sopater of Berœa, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Luke from Philippi, Gaius from Derbe (a different man from Paul's host in Corinth), Timothy from Lystra, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Ephesus

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2 *The week at Troas,—vss 7-12*

When we recall the fact that now Paul seems to be consumed with anxiety to reach Jerusalem by May 17th of that spring, the date of Pentecost in A D 58, it seems strange that he and his company should have tarried as much as seven days in Troas When we put alongside this fact the statement that the apostle was five days accomplishing the voyage from Philippi, which his first crossing had accomplished in two days, and the further fact that usually the winds at that season and in those waters blew in the day-time from the northwest, and hence were most favorable, we conjecture that Paul must have had an unusual and stormy crossing, and possibly may have suffered another shipwreck, of which he had already had three, and all perhaps on small coasting vessels such as were available in those waters If this was so, he would need a week to rest and recuperate before going on.

However it may be with such conjectures, the interesting fact is

that nine of the faithful missionaries of Jesus Christ were gathered together in Troas for a blessed week of fellowship and evangelism. In the coming days of trial, separation and suffering, how often must they have looked back to those days of sweet communion, and taken courage from that memory for all that was still to come!

Luke gives us one little picture of the closing day and night of that memorable week Upon the first day of the week,—the second Lord's Day of their stay in Troas, Luke says "when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow" It was the evening of the Lord's Day In Troas, as in many other cities, the primitive disciples were, in general, poor, many of them servants They could not command their own time They could not, therefore, come together till after nightfall Possibly also it was thought to be safer, though evidently there was no great effort after secrecy, for there were many lights in that third-story room, and the window lattices were open, evidently for comfort and ventilation in that mild spring night They were going to celebrate the Lord's Supper, but Paul had much to say before they came to the Holy Feast

Boy-like, the lad Eutychus had sought the window-seat. But owing to the late hour and Paul's long sermon, the poor lad found it a very dangerous place He could not keep awake, and, losing his balance while sleeping, he fell out of the window, and, striking the ground from the third floor, was, as was thought, instantly killed. Of course, the service was interrupted till Paul went down and resuscitated the unfortunate boy, and comforted his kindred by presenting him alive There is room for doubt whether Eutychus was actually killed, or only so badly hurt that there seemed to be no life in him.

The observance of the Memorial Feast was now resumed; and Paul continued to speak to the company of believers till the break of day It was a memorable night in Troas, comparable only with that other night years before, when the man of Macedonia appeared and called for help Paul was at Troas at a later period, and seems then to have left the city in such haste as not to bring away his cloak, and books and parchments, (2 Tim 4 13) But at present the brotherhood seem to have a presentiment that they all would meet no more; and they could not but linger and listen to their

beloved teacher. And only with the coming on of the light could they tear themselves away, while the apostolic company prepared for their long journey

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Verse 7. The parting of believers is ever solemnized and sweetened by final meetings at the Lord's Table —Vs 7b Protracted services are justifiable on rare occasions.—Vs 9 Sleeping in Church is not always due to long sermons poor ventilation makes many a sermon dull and ineffectual

Vss 7–12. RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

I. Sanctioned by Christianity
   1. The first day of the week.
   2 The Lord's Supper
   3 The preaching of the Gospel
II. Intruding on the claims of nature
   1 When employed for purposes of inordinate excitement
   2 When unduly protracted
III. Associated with the supernatural power of restoration
   1 Man is the organ of it
   2. Man is the subject of it —(*The Homilist*)

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3. *From Troas to Miletus,—vss 13–16.*

If we keep a few facts in mind we shall not find it difficult to trace from day to day this voyage of the apostle along the coast of Asia. The prevailing winds in those waters in the spring of the year, and in the day-time are said to be from the northwest; while in the night-time the process is reversed, and the winds blow from the southeast. Vessels, therefore, must encounter opposing winds, if they seek to skirt those Ionian shores going southward after nightfall. But in Paul's day, owing to the absence of light-houses on those numerous headlands, and just at this time the darkening moon after the Passover, they did not try to sail by night. And therefore Luke gives us the various anchorages of the vessel which carried the returning missionaries. Again, we may take it for granted that the Lord's Supper in Troas was on the 16th of April, their second Lord's Day in that city. They sailed from Troas therefore on Monday, April 17th The first day they sailed as far as Mitylene, the capital city of the island of Lesbos. The first part of the voyage was around the promontory of

Lectum. Paul had determined to go overland the nineteen miles from Troas to Assos, where the vessel was to touch, and could take him on board His motive in this is not clear. He may have wanted a few hours in quiet after that exhausting night in Troas. It is suggested that in this way he would circumvent the assassins, who had been foiled in their effort to kill him on the vessel on which he had intended to sail from Cenchreæ, and who, he may have had reason to suspect, were still on his track.

The vessel left Mitylene on the 18th of April, and in the evening anchored at Chios. The next day, the 19th, they sailed down to Samos, and, crossing the strait between the island and the mainland, anchored for the night at Trogyllium. On the 20th of April they left Trogyllium, and by the evening of that day arrived at Miletus The vessel was to tarry there several days. And because Paul was hastening on his eastward journey he determined not to tarry at Ephesus, but to send for the elders of that Church to meet him at his anchorage, for a farewell conference. It was thirty-six miles up from Miletus to Ephesus, and it seems likely that the elders of the Church could not get together, and make the journey from the city to the port much before the Lord's Day, April 23d. So here it was, on that memorable Lord's Day probably, and in that seaport city, that Paul met for the last time his beloved Ephesian brethren

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Verses 13-16 Days of sweet fellowship,—spring-days of rare loveliness, and peaceful sailings among the islands of that beautiful Ionian Sea, must have given the missionary travelers another memorable and blessed week.

(b) *Paul's address at Miletus,—vss. 17-38*

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the Church 18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them,

Ye yourselves know, from the day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, 19 serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews, 20 how I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, 21 testifying, both to Jews and Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ

22 And now, behold, I go bound in spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there 23 save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24 But I

hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more 26 Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men 27 For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God 28 Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of the Lord which He purchased with His own blood 29 I know that, after my departing, grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock, 30 and from among yourselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them 31 Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears

32 And now I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified 33 I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel 34 Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me 35 In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all 37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, 38 sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more And they brought him on his way to the ship

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1 *Paul's review of his Ephesian ministry,—vss 17–21.* 2 *His foresight of coming tribulations,—vss 22–24* 3 *His mingled exhortations and admonitions,—vss. 25–31* 4. *His tender and weighty farewell,—vss 32–38.*

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1. *Paul's review of his Ephesian ministry,—vss. 17–21.*

The apostle's address is characterized by remarkable frankness, tenderness and fidelity. He would have the Ephesian elders know (1) That from his first coming into the province of Asia his had been a lowly service of the Lord with many tears,—(2) That he had suffered many trials through the plottings of his Jewish enemies Metaphorically he had "fought with wild beasts at Ephesus." So a little later in Macedonia he had suffered from great heaviness of spirits, and persecution of life,—"without were fightings and within were fears." And the care of all the Churches had been

a heavy burden for him to carry,—(3) That his ministry had, nevertheless, been untiring and faithful. He had kept back nothing that was profitable to them; but "publicly, and from house to house, had testified both to Jews and Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" We may well believe that here as elsewhere Paul grounded these fundamental requisites for salvation on the great fact of a crucified and risen Christ.

Verse 19 The true minister will be of lowly mind His ministry is likely to be marked by many trials and many tears Happy he who can cite his own ministry as one he would have his brethren imitate —Vss 20-21 A faithful ministry will not shun to declare whatever is for the real good of the people Public teaching and house-to-house teaching must go hand in hand The cardinal themes of Gospel preaching must ever be repentance and faith

Vss. 17-21 Pastoral Retrospection

I The difficulties
II The duties and } of the true minister of Christ
III. The doctrines

(*The Homilist*)

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2. *His foresight of coming tribulations,—vss. 22-24.*

That peaceful voyage over the island-dotted sea, and the joys of Christian fellowship, and this meeting with the beloved elders of Ephesus, did not blind Paul's eyes to future trials. The details of what was before him he knew not, but in every city he had the witness of the Divine Spirit that he was going to bonds and afflictions. Nor did this give him any concern. Life itself had only this attraction for him that it gave him opportunity for continued service of his blessed Master and his only concern was that he might finish his course as a faithful minister of the Holy Evangel,—"the ministry he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God"

Verse 22 We know not what things are to befall us in the coming days and years —Vs 23 Affliction and sorrow are certain elements in every believing life They ought not greatly to distress us, for they cannot really harm us if we belong to the Lord —Vs 24 Our chief concern should be to

accomplish the work given to us. and so to bear witness to the gracious Gospel of the Lord Jesus as to fulfill the ministry with which He has entrusted us.

Vs 24. CHRISTIAN HEROISM.

I The Christian life requires bravery
II. This reveals to us the reason why many people are not Christians
III How much Christian heroism is displayed by men and women alike!
(The Treasury)

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3. *His mingled exhortations and admonitions,—vss. 25-31.*

Incidentally, assuring them that he would not again visit Ephesus, and disavowing all further responsibility for their spiritual welfare, he solemnly testifies that he is pure from the blood of all men, for he had not shrunk from declaring unto them the whole counsel of God. He admonishes them therefore to take heed to themselves, and to all the Church over which the Holy Spirit had appointed them elders. They were to feed the Lord's Church It was very dear to Him: He had bought it with His own blood He warns them against the incoming of designing and ambitious men,—"grievous wolves" he calls them,—bent on destroying the Church, and the rise among themselves of perverse teachers, who should divide the Church, and draw many away from the truth to become their own disciples. He beseeches them to remember that for three years he had not ceased to admonish every one night and day with tears

We would not willingly lose this picture of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, as we have every reason to believe it was equally true of his messages in other places. Faithfulness and tenderness in equal measure characterized his ministrations. It was the ministry of a consecrated spirit, and everywhere it was owned and blessed with fruitfulness and power from on High.

Verse 25 "Preaching the Kingdom" is a pregnant utterance respecting a glorious work—Vs 26 Blessed is that minister (Is there now such an one?) who can say, "I am pure from the blood of all men"—Vss 26-27 Where lie the limits of our personal responsibility for our fellow-men? To be free from the blood of our fellow-men we must faithfully declare the whole counsel of God, whether they will hear or forbear—Vs 28 The ministers of Christ cannot take any proper care of their people unless they

take heed unto themselves The people of God are the flock of the Chief Shepherd, they are to be "fed" by His under-shepherds To allow them to perish in ignorance, starving for want of food, is a terrible shortcoming and offence in the sight of the Lord,—for He purchased them with His own blood!—Vs 29 False and ambitious men, deceived and deceiving, are ever ready to use the Church for their own selfish purposes, and they care not that they ruin the brotherhood of believers, if only they may gain their own ends—Vs 31 A faithful ministry must be characterized by unceasing admonitions, though they must be uttered, even night and day, and with many tears—Vs 32 The best thing a faithful minister can do for his people is to commend them to God

Vss. 26-27 MINISTERIAL FIDELITY.

I Wherein it consists
II The difficulty of maintaining it
III The importance of it to the souls of men
Simeon, Rev. Charles (Horæ Homileticæ).

Vs 28 THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST'S BLOOD.

I Sublimely unique in its nature
 1 In accordance with the eternal plan of God
 2 It was voluntarily shed
 3 It was free from all imperfection
II Sublimely unique in its effects
 1 These effects are variously represented
 2 Universal in their influence
 3 Eternal in their blessings—(*The Homilist.*)

Vs. 28 IN THE FLOCK, NOT OVER IT

I "In" the flock as to his personal hope
II "In" the flock as to all the relations and responsibilities of life
III This makes ministerial sympathy possible—(*Vaughn, Rev Dr C. J*)

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4. *His tender and weighty farewell,—vss. 32-38.*

Paul's last words to the elders of Ephesus are few, but they carry the profoundest feelings of his great spirit Reminding them of his own self-denying example, in working with his own hands for his daily bread, and the utter absence of all covetous desires he

beseeches them in like manner to remember the weak ones of the flock, and to keep ever in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said,—It is more blessed to give than to receive. And while he turns them away from himself as no longer able to care for and help them, "he commends them to God, and to the word of His grace, which was able to build them up, and give them the inheritance among all them that are sanctified"

Then, with a final prayer the touching interview is ended With sorrowing hearts and many tears the parting, which they knew would be final, came on, and they accompanied him to the ship,—"sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken that they should see his face no more."

Verse 33 The minister must not be a covetous man,—but in all things an example to his congregation —Vs 37 Partings on earth look to the blessed inheritance and reunions of the better world above, and our sorrows, therefore, are not hopeless bereavements

Vss 22–23 THE WISDOM OF PROVIDENCE IN CONCEALING THE FUTURE

I Adapted to promote a life of faith
II Teaches the necessity of prayer
III Leads to the cultivation of a spirit of moderation
IV Tends to arm us against troubles
V Intended to prepare us for a better state —(*The Preacher*)

Vs 32 THE WORD OF GRACE.

I Restoring the ruins of sin
II. Investing with the heavenly inheritance

Vs 35a THE TRUE BROTHERHOOD

I Helping the weak
II Remembering Christ's word
III Receiving the blessing of self-sacrifice

Vs. 35 THE BEATITUDE OF THE GIVER

I The example of St Paul
II. The great maxims of the Great Teachers
III The words of the Lord Jesus
IV. The example of Jesus —(*Hastings, Rev Dr James*)

Vs 35 GIVING AND RECEIVING

I We can give only what we have received
II We have received in order that we may give
III It is better to give than to receive—(*Thomas, Rev U R*)

(c) *From Miletus to Jerusalem,—vss 21 1–16*

1 And when it came to pass that we were parted from them and had set sail, we came with a straight course unto Cos, and the next day unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara 2 and, having found a ship crossing over unto Phœnicia, we went aboard, and set sail 3 And when we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left hand, we sailed unto Syria, and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unlade her burden 4 And, having found the disciples, we tarried there seven days, and these said to Paul, through the Spirit, that he should not set foot in Jerusalem 5 And when it came to pass that we had accomplished the days, we departed, and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way till we were out of the city, and, kneeling down on the beach, we prayed, and bade each other farewell, 6 and we went on board the ship, and they returned home again 7 And when we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day

8 And on the morrow we departed, and came unto Cæsarea and, entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we abode with him 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters, who prophesied 10 And as we tarried there some days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet named Agabus 11 And coming to us, and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles 12 And, when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done

15 And after these days we took up our baggage and went up to Jerusalem 16 And there went with us also certain of the disciples from Cæsarea, bringing with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge

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1 *The voyage to Cæsarea, via Tyre and Acre,—vss 1–7* 2 *With Philip, the Evangelist,—vss 8–14* 3. *The arrival in the Holy City,—vss 15–16*

1. *The voyage to Cæsarea, via Tyre and Acre,—vss. 1-7.*

If, as seems probable, Paul's address at Miletus was on the Lord's Day, April 23d, A D 58, and like the one at Troas prolonged into the night, he must have torn himself away from his beloved friends on Monday, the 24th Some of those who had accompanied Paul to Asia were probably left by him at Miletus Luke and Trophimus, at any rate, are the only persons of the company, which left Corinth with him, who are mentioned as continuing with him to the end of his journey By the evening of the 24th of April they found anchorage at the island of Cos, and by the evening of the next day they had come to Rhodes, and found safe anchorage in that notable harbor The 26th of April they spent in sailing away from the islands of Ionia across to the shores of Lycia, reaching the mainland at Patara.

It was necessary for the returning missionaries to take another ship at this point, as Patara was the port to which the vessel on which they had been sailing was destined Happily they found one crossing over to Phœnicia; and at once they went aboard and set sail It was about four hundred and fifty miles from Patara to Tyre by the course they took, in sight of Cyprus, but south of that island They would probably make about one hundred and twenty-five miles a day and night (for in the open sea they would continue sailing by night), and this was about the average rate of going of sailing vessels in those days, so that it would take nearly four days to reach Tyre. And, if we may suppose they left Patara on Thursday, April 27th, it would be the Lord's Day, April 30th, when they landed on the Syrian shore.

As Paul was now over two weeks before Pentecost there was no longer any special need for haste, and he tarried seven days in Tyre. There seem not to have been many disciples in this commercial emporium, and the missionaries had to search them out, for so the phrase, "having found the disciples," literally signifies And with them the travelers tarried in restful fellowship This communion so grew in all the elements of tender affection that when the week had expired, finding themselves unable to persuade Paul to change his mind and plans, and heed the Divine intimations of coming trouble, they went with him to the ship It is a

beautiful yet pathetic picture which the historian paints for us of that little group of believers with their wives and children parting on those Syrian sands with the home-going evangelists. Together they knelt upon the beach in prayer; and so bade each other farewll.

The new ship soon brought the missionaries from Tyre to Ptolemais, or the modern Acre, where they finally debarked, their voyages on the deep for the present being ended They saluted the brethren of Acre, and tarried with them one day It is forty-four miles from Acre to Cæsarea; and the travelers could accomplish the journey easily in two days They probably reached Cæsarea on the 10th of May, and remained with Philip, the evangelist, one of the seven deacons, for a number of days Four or five days of blessed fellowship with this unique household would still give Paul time enough to reach Jerusalem by the 17th of May, and he would probably not wish to arrive in the city much before the actual date of the Pentecostal Feast

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2 *With Philip, the Evangelist,—vss 8-14*

The incidents of these days in Philip's house are notable, and somewhat difficult of interpretation The prophesying virgin daughters of the honored evangelist would give Paul, if he wished it, a good opportunity to learn the will of his Divine Master The coming and symbolic prophecy of the old prophet, Agabus (who more than twenty years before in Antioch had foretold the coming famine), gave Paul positive assurances of the danger he was sure to encounter in going up to Jerusalem. What was the meaning of these foretellings? Did the Lord mean that Paul should heed them, and escape the danger by keeping away from Jerusalem? So the Cæsarean brethren seemed to think, and they besought Paul not to go up to Jerusalem But Paul would not be persuaded. The most satisfactory explanation of Paul's wilful ignoring of the words of Agabus, and all previous intimations of coming trials, is that he believed the Lord was testing his faith and steadfastness and therefore they were of no avail in turning him aside from the course on which he believed himself divinely guided So he answered his brethren,—"What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at

Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" Then they ceased to importune him, and said, "The will of the Lord be done"

Vs 13 PREPAREDNESS FOR DEATH

I Death detaches a man from depending on what is material
II Death involves an experience of utter loneliness
III Death brings us into the most vivid realization of God's presence
(The Homilist)

3 *The arrival in the Holy City,—vss 15-16*

The missionaries left Philip probably after the Lord's Day, May 14th, in time to accomplish the journey of seventy-five miles from Cæsarea to Jerusalem by the 17th of May, the Feast of Pentecost beginning on that day at six o'clock in the evening And so on Wednesday, May 17th, A. D 58, Paul was domiciled with Mnason of Cyprus, an old (or, as per the Revision, an early) disciple: and the third great missionary journey was ended

Vs 15 AN OLD DISCIPLE

I Hold fast to your early faith, and to the Christ whom you have known
II The welcome we should be ready to give new thoughts and ways
III The beauty that may dwell in an obscure life
(Maclaren, Rev Dr Alexander.)

So far as Luke's narrative carries us, this is the end of Paul's missionary labors A brief sketch of the chronology of Paul's life, up to this point, will not be uninteresting, nor out of place The subjoined details follow in the main Lewin's chronicle, with which many other writers substantially agree

Paul was converted in the year A D 37, four years after the Crucifixion Till A D 40 he was in retirement in Arabia He then came to Jerusalem, and soon after, to escape the plottings of the Jews, he was sent to Tarsus, spending several years in evangelizing Syria and Cilicia Barnabas brought him to Antioch in A. D. 43 They two visited Jerusalem, with relief for the poor of that city, in the famine that occurred in the reign of Claudius, i. e., in

the year A. D. 44 The subsequent ministry in Antioch carried them to the spring of A D 45,—and to the Great Missionary Commission. The spring, summer and autumn of A D. 45 were spent in the First Missionary Journey, via Cyprus from Antioch to Derbe in Lycaonia, and the return via Perga and Attalia After the return from Attalia, for a number of years,—five or six, perhaps,—the controversy in Antioch, and its settlement by the First Christian Council, occupied the attention of the missionaries In the year A D 51 Paul and Silas went forth on the Second Missionary Journey,—carrying them from Antioch to Corinth, and from which they returned, after nearly four years, in the spring of A D 54. The Third and Last Missionary Journey, "from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum," occupied nearly four years more, running from the summer of A D 54 to the Feast of Pentecost in the spring of A D 58

Twenty-one years had now passed since Paul became "the slave of the Lord Jesus Christ," as he loved to call himself, and he was not yet advanced in life, being probably less than sixty years old. But his exhausting labors, infirmities, and persecutions had doubtless broken down his physical strength, and made him prematurely old, so that a few years later, less than half-a-dozen probably, he could speak of himself as "such an one as Paul the aged" But his indomitable spirit had yet much and most powerful testimony to give as one of the Lord's witnesses,—though he must utter that testimony in chains!

DIVISION III.

WITNESSES "UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH,"—XIII :1—XXVIII :31.

PART II —THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL THE PRISONER,—XXI 17—XXVIII·31

SECTION I —THE PRELIMINARY EVENTS,—21 17–40

SUB-SECTION I —*The Fruitless Device,—vss 17–30*

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James, and all the elders were present 19 And when he had saluted them, he rehearsed one by one the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles through his ministry 20 And they, when they heard it, glorified God,

And they said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them that have believed, and they are all zealous for the law 21 and they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs 22 What is it, therefore? they will certainly hear that thou art come 23 Do this therefore that we say to thee We have four men that have a vow on them 24 these take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges for them, that they may shave their heads and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning thee, but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, keeping the law 25 But as touching the Gentiles that have believed, we wrote, giving judgment that they should keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled, and from fornication 26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself with them, went into the temple, declaring the fulfillment of the days of purification, until the offering was offered for every one of them

27 And when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, Men of Israel, help This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place 29 For they had before seen with him in the city Trophimus the

Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple 30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together, and they laid hold on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple and straightway the doors were shut.

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1. *Paul's report to James and the elders of Jerusalem; and their reception of his tidings,—vss. 17-20 2 The plan to counteract the unfriendly rumors about Paul's course and ministry,—vss 21-26 3 The failure of this effort to quiet these injurious reports,—vss 27-30*

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1 *Paul's report to James and the elders of Jerusalem, and their reception of his tidings,—vss 17-20* ..

The day following their arrival in the Holy City the missionaries presented themselves before the leaders of the Mother-Church. This was on the Day of Pentecost Twenty-eight years had now gone by since the Pentecostal Baptism of the Holy Spirit In that time the Gospel had spread with marvelous rapidity over a large part of the Roman Empire; and for three-fourths of that period Paul had been the most indefatigable and successful evangelist of the new faith. And now he comes to Jerusalem to tell his brethren of the successes of his last great missionary tour He does not come as a subordinate to report to his superiors Rather as to co-equal brethren he rehearses the Lord's doings among the heathen, that they and he may rejoice together

Luke's narrative is very brief Some things we know which he does not tell. We cannot indeed say who composed the full missionary delegation We know that Paul and Luke and Trophimus were in the company We are left to conjecture,—a safe conjecture surely,—as to some things which took place in that conference Luke tells us that Paul "rehearsed one by one the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles through his ministry" But Luke does not tell us, what was almost certainly true, that he and Trophimus were among the commissioners of the Churches in foreign lands to bring their offerings to the help of their poorer brethren

When the brethren in Jerusalem heard these things they glorified God, giving thanks for the triumphs of the Gospel,—for the solici-

tude of the missionaries to comply with the wishes of the leaders in Jerusalem as to the offerings for the poor,—and for this tangible evidence of the Christian faith and love thus manifested by unknown and far-off brethren Luke does not mention the offerings, but this can hardly be taken as an evidence that the Jerusalem disciples felt no gratitude to Paul and their Gentile brethren

Vss 17-20a THE FOREIGN MISSIONARY'S RETURN

I His welcome home
II His report from the field
III The result of his story

Vss 18-19 PAUL'S CHRISTIAN CONDUCT.

I Reporting to suspicious brethren
II. Telling what the Lord had done
III Bringing offerings for poor saints

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2 The plan to counteract the unfriendly rumors about Paul's course and ministry,—vss 21-26

Naturally the leaders in Jerusalem were anxious that men, who had been so honored of the Lord, and so mindful of His poor, should be received with favor by their Jewish brethren. Injurious reports were rife in Jerusalem concerning the teaching of the apostle in his evangelistic tours "They have been informed concerning thee," such was the report, "that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs" And when his enemies caught him in the temple they cried out against him, "This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place" To stem the tide of opinion adverse to the Master Missionary, created by these reports, and to establish him if possible in the good graces of those who were so zealous for the law, the leaders of the Mother-Church had devised this scheme, viz —Taking advantage of the fact that Paul was himself apparently in the city, among other things, to fulfill a vow, and that there were four other men likewise seeking release from, by fulfilling, their Nazarite obligations, but were as

yet unable to meet the expense, they proposed that Paul should join these men, pay the entire charges for the oblations and sacrifices of the company, and so continue with them through the usual time until all the prescriptions of the ritual (Num 6:13–21) had been fulfilled In this way he, who was charged with seeking the abolition of the Mosaic institutes, would furnish incontestable evidence of his zeal and faithfulness in "walking after the customs" To secure the apostle's acquiescence in their plan, they would have him note that it was in no respect in contravention of the decrees of the First Christian Council, for those decrees had no bearing upon the conduct of Jewish believers, but only of the Gentiles

It was a beautiful scheme; but it would not work It is a little doubtful whether Paul himself had much faith in it But he, who was willing to become all things to all men, if by any means he might save some, could not refuse compliance with the request of his brethren

Before noting the breaking down of the plan, we may well pause a moment to inquire whether, after all, the charges against Paul were not substantially true Certainly in the letter they were false Paul had no mission to persuade his countrymen to apostatize from Moses His contention always and everywhere had been that the Gentile converts should not be compelled to become Jews in order that they might be acknowledged as Christians.

But, as we ponder the matter more deeply, we must reach the conclusion that the opinion of the Jews was measurably correct, and that in the last analysis the principles which Paul advocated must break down Judaism, and set aside the Mosaic ritual It was, indeed, to the Gentiles of Galatia that Paul wrote, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything" But any discerning mind could not fail to reason,—If that principle be correct, it cannot be more true of the Gentiles than it is of the Jews Paul, first of all, and most clearly of all, must have perceived the justice of this conclusion, and we can imagine him saying, "If my brethren would look below the surface they would see the futility of all efforts after concord of outward observances, and that there is and must ever be an irrepressible conflict between the law of the letter, as observed by these Jewish zealots, and the law of the spirit by which the missionaries of the Cross are governed."

Vss. 20b–26 THE COMPROMISE

I. Conceived in a good spirit
II Liable to be misunderstood
III. Failed because too superficial

Vss 20b–24. CONCESSIONS TO WEAK BRETHREN

I. Legitimate
  1 When they do not require any violation of conscience
  2. When they remove stumbling-blocks
  3 When they promote peace
II Illegitimate
  1 When they mislead the weak brother to think he is right
  2 When adopted for peace's sake rather than righteousness
  3. When they offend as many as they please

(*The Preacher's Homiletical Commentary.*)

Vss 24–26 PAUL AMONG THE NAZARITES

I Not as a slave of human ordinances
II Not as a hypocrite before men.
III Not as a fugitive from the Cross—(*Lange's Commentary.*)

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3 *The failure of this effort to quiet these injurious reports,— vss. 27–30.*

Whatever surprise there was among the believing brotherhood over this outburst of fanatical zeal, Paul could hardly have been taken unawares, even if he had not been warned by the Spirit that bonds and afflictions awaited him He foresaw the impending outbreak, and was prepared for it The storm broke suddenly and with uncontrollable fury Some of the Jews from Asia saw the apostle in the temple possibly completing the fulfillment of his vow. They knew Paul; possibly they were from Ephesus, and knew of the commotions in that great city arising from Paul's ministry They were evidently kindred spirits with those who purposed killing Paul on his proposed voyage from Corinth. They had seen the apostle in the streets of Jerusalem in company with Trophimus, a Gentile of Ephesus, and in their malice supposed and re-

ported that Paul had brought an alien into the sacred precincts of the temple. And, taking counsel of their fears, the multitudes magnified the one into many, and saw their Holy House overrun with foreigners. So their fury blazed forth The tidings spread. "All the city was moved, and the people ran together, and they laid hold on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple," and "straightway the doors were shut." The fanatics would not shed blood in the Holy House; but once outside the sacred enclosure they began to beat Paul, and doubtless would soon have killed him The mob acts without reason, and such was the ungovernable rage of the multitude it seemed as if no power on earth could save Paul from being done to death The poisoned arrows of malice and falsehood had done their deadly work, and all schemes of conciliation and outward concord were swept into the maelstrom of blind and unreasoning hate, where the brave and faithful missionary of the Cross lay wounded and bleeding in the outer courts of the House of God.

Vs 29 THE FOLLY OF SUPPOSING

I The immeasurable mischief wrought by it
II. The folly of supposing that one is a Christian who has not even the beginnings of faith in Christ
   1 Some are deceived by Satan
   2 Some are self-deceived
   3. Some are too indifferent to know the reality of their condition

(*Hallock, Rev Dr, in The Treasury*)

SUB-SECTION 2—*The Apostle's Arrest,—vss 31-40*

And as they were seeking to kill him, tidings came up to the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in confusion 32 And forthwith he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down upon them and they, when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, left off beating Paul 33 Then the chief captain came near, and laid hold on him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and inquired who he was, and what he had done 34 And some shouted one thing, and some another, among the crowd and when he could not know the certainty for the uproar, he commanded him to be brought into the castle 35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the crowd; 36 for the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, Away with him

37 And as Paul was about to be brought into the castle, he saith unto

the chief captain, May I say something unto thee? And he said, Dost thou know Greek? 38 Art thou not then the Egyptian, who before these days stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness the four thousand men of the Assassins? 39 But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people 40 And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with the hand unto the people, and when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew language

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1. *The rescue from the mob,—vss 31-36* 2 *The colloquy with the chiliarch,—vss. 37-40.*

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1. *The rescue from the mob,—vss. 31-36*

The fanaticism of the rabble saved Paul's life Had they smitten the apostle down where they first laid hold on him, he would have been beyond human help. Their superstitious reverence for the temple delayed the bloody and decisive stroke, and gave time for the effective interposition of the Roman power. The chiliarch of Jerusalem acted with military promptness, and, with soldiers and centurions, ran down from the castle His intervention was none too soon, but happily it was not too late The ægis of imperial Rome was thrown over the prostrate Paul, and he rose from the ground, safe from the vindictive mob,—safe, though a prisoner in chains,—safe, though still assaulted even to the castle stairs by the infuriated crowd, who, like disappointed wolves, were still ravening for their prey.

Verse 32. God's help is always opportune

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2. *The colloquy with the chiliarch,—vss. 37-40.*

There were cool heads in that seething throng,—none more so than was Paul's. Blood-stained and dust-covered as he doubtless was, and uncertain, as it might seem, whether Rome or the rabble would triumph in the conflict, he maintained a tranquil spirit, assured that, whether he died by the hands of the mob or the military

power, the Lord, who had appeared to him from the opened heavens on the Damascus road, would be with him still.

So, while the people were crying out, "Away with him," Paul bespoke the attention of the chiliarch, and besought of him an opportunity to speak to the people It was the same brave spirit that would have faced the howling mob of Diana's worshippers in the theater at Ephesus. The chiliarch's judgment of the apostle comes out in the surprise of his answer, "Dost thou know Greek? Art thou not then the Egyptian, who before these days stirred up to sedition, and led out into the wilderness, the four thousand men of the Assassins?" We can hardly find fault with the chief captain's surmise. With torn and disordered garments, stained with blood and dust, Paul must have looked more like a brigand than a preacher of righteousness But the nobility of his nature shines forth from his ragged attire, as he answers, "I am a man, who am a Jew, of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia,—a citizen of no mean city, and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people." The chiliarch was profoundly impressed by the dignified demeanor of his prisoner and the attitude of conscious rectitude and innocence which he exhibited, and graciously acceded to his request, and gave him leave to address his fellow-countrymen.

Vss 31–40 Paul's Rescue

I A picture of human passions
II A picture of Christian heroism
III A picture of Divine guidance
(*Lange's Commentary, ad loc*)

Vs. 40 The Stairway Sermon

I The preacher
II. The pulpit
III The congregation
IV The unction of the speaker.
(*Lange's Commentary, ad loc*)

Section 2—*The Testimony on the Stairs,—vss 22·1–22*

1 Brethren and fathers, hear ye the defence which I now make unto you 2 And when they heard that he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, they were the more quiet and he saith,

3 I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day 4 and I

persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women 5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and journeyed to Damascus to bring them also that were there unto Jerusalem in bonds to be punished 6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and drew nigh unto Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me 7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest 9 And they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me 10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do 11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me I came into Damascus 12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there, 13 came unto me, and, standing by me, said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight And in that very hour I looked upon him 14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth 15 For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard 16 And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name.

17 And it came to pass, that, when I had returned to Jerusalem, and while I prayed in the temple, I fell into a trance, 18 and saw Him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning Me 19 And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee 20 and when the blood of Stephen, thy witness, was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him 21 And he said unto me, Depart for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and they lifted up their voice, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth for it is not fit that he should live

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1 *Winning attention,—vss 1-5* 2 *The heavenly vision,—vss 6-16* 3 *The trance in the temple,—vss 17-22*

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1. *Winning attention,—vss. 1-5*

It requires some reflection and comparison to realize the tact and wisdom with which Paul measured up to the new and trying circumstances which now surrounded him. By the rehearsal of

a noble and thrilling story he had won Pisidian Antioch. By a daring linking together of the risen Nazarene with the "unknown God" whom they ignorantly worshipped, he had gained the mingled respect and ridicule of the wise men of Athens. But these were easy tasks compared with gaining the ear of a howling mob of his infuriated countrymen Manacled and bound, beaten and sore, he stands before the helmeted Roman and the raging Jew. He has permission to speak. Of what avail to speak? Who will put down the stones and quietly scatter the handsful of gathered dust, and listen to one already practically adjudged to death? But Paul will be heard In a moment those discordant noises cease. The raging multitudes are silent and intent. A master hand is sweeping the chords of their better natures, and the fanatics of the temple give the renegade Jew the profoundest audience. How did Paul manage it?

The mother tongue had something to do with it. The voice of him they heard, and many seemingly knew not, was not that of a barbarian. The prisoner had spoken to the chiliarch in the mellifluous tones of Athenian culture; but such, they say, are not the tones we now hear. Nor are they the sonorous syllables of our Roman masters. They are the unmistakable accents of our mother tongue. He can be no stranger He must be a kinsman of our own Let us listen to his words

Paul's unfailing courtesy had much also to do with the attention he obtained After the treatment he had received we might have expected the apostle to break out upon his enemies in the fierce invectives with which he overwhelmed the Paphian sorcerer. He would have been justified in denouncing them as bloodthirsty and insensate violators of all human and divine laws. But he did not. How sweet and serene sounded that voice of the reviled and persecuted missionary of the Cross over all the babel din and roar of angry passion and cries of malignant hate,—"Men! Brethren and Fathers!" Paul looked upon the fury-laden countenances of men in their prime, who crowded the castle stairs to avenge the profanation of their Holy House; and he saw a picture of what he himself had been a score of years before, and still had been but for Grace Divine. Venerable heads and flowing beards were in that motley throng. In their earnest faces and fire-flashing eyes he saw the deep and passionate love with which so recently he had

gloried in the divine inheritances of Judaism, and, with something of his Master's compassion, he took them all to his great heart as fellow-heirs of the Divine Promises, and so addresses them,—"Men! Brethren and Fathers, hear ye my defence which I now make unto you"

And then he tells the story of his own early life And that story, so artless and true, riveted their attention, and they gave him a patient audience. Had they thought him a renegade or stranger? How strange to many of them to learn that he was as well-born and bred as they were themselves A Hebrew of the Hebrews, though born in a foreign city, he had been brought up in their own holy city, and at the feet of one of their most renowned Rabbis He had been instructed "according to the strict manner of the law of their fathers," and had been zealous for God, even, says Paul, "as ye all are this day" Not only so, but he had been an unrelenting persecutor of the followers of the Nazarene. To these facts the high priest and the whole body of the Sanhedrin could bear witness, for from him and them he had received his commission to follow them "of the Way" even to foreign cities

It was a brief but tactful and masterly introduction to what Paul had yet to say With their attention thoroughly won, and their minds pondering perhaps the unspoken question, What could have so changed our bold and fiery co-religionist? the way is open for Paul to rehearse the story of his conversion

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Verse 2 The power of the mother-tongue,—see Acts 2 8 The Gospel will come to men with the greatest power in their vernaculars—Vs 3 Happy he who is not ashamed of his upbringing—Vs 4 The recalling of wicked ways may be for the glory of God, as here, or for personal humiliation, as in 1 Tim 1 12-16

Vss 1-21. PAUL'S DEFENCE

A model
I Of wisdom and moderation
II Of simplicity
III Of truthfulness
IV Of courageous utterance—(*Clark, Rev F E*)

2 *The heavenly vision,—vss. 6–16.*

We have already considered the details of this remarkable scene on the Damascus road (See Div II, Page 128); and there is little need for us to dwell upon it here The boldness, fidelity, and far-reaching consequences of Paul's testimony deserve special attention He was speaking to many who believed Jesus was an impostor,—to many who denied the resurrection, and scoffed at the whole doctrine of immortality But he does not hesitate to set forth the few and simple facts which had revolutionized his whole life and character He had seen Jesus of Nazareth in the glory of the opened heavens He had heard His voice, and had obeyed His command, and through the ministry of Ananias his eyes had been opened, and he had received a commission, higher and holier than that of the Grand Council, to go forth unto all men as a witness of the things which he had seen and heard

The crowd was held spellbound by this convincing testimony, and awed by the evident supernaturalism of this heavenly vision, and they continued to follow him with intensest interest, as he now unveils a story not elsewhere repeated in the sacred chronicle

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Verses 8 and 10 The awakened soul cries, "Who art thou, Lord?" The converted spirit says, "What shall I do, Lord?"

Vss 2–16 PAUL'S FIRST VISION

I The material and external
  1 The great light
  2 The appearance of Jesus.
  3 The voice
II. The internal and spiritual
  1 The cardinal truth announced
  2 The solemn remonstrance
  3 The appointment to a grand commission—(*The Homilist*)

Vs 8 A SIGNIFICANT VOICE FROM HEAVEN.

I A change of worlds does not change the personal identity of a man.
II Great natures are never ashamed of their origin, however humble
III. The meanest spots on earth, when they become the scenes of holy lives, are famous in the universe—(*The Homilist*)

Vss 14-15 PAUL'S GLORIOUS DESTINY

I. To know the will of God
II To see the Righteous One
III. To hear the word from His mouth
IV. To be the Lord's witness

Vs 16 GETTING RID OF SIN.

I. A possible }
II. A praying } work.
III. An urgent } (*The Homilist*)

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3. *The trance in the temple,—vss. 17-22.*

Paul's reference to this episode in his experience was an indirect answer to the charge that he had profaned their Holy House. How could he desecrate the place whither he had gone to pray in the most solemn crisis of his life and destiny,—where he had so agonized in supplication for his fellow-countrymen as to lose all consciousness of time and place and circumstance, and where, whether in the body or out of the body who could tell? he had heard his Divine Lord speaking to him, and pointing his course and ministry away from the temple and city of his fathers,—"Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me" And when he pled to be allowed to remain and his special qualifications to be a convincing and persuasive witness to his own people, as he said, "Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee, and when the blood of Stephen Thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him," his wishes were disregarded; and he was under a divine compulsion to turn his back upon all that was dear to him, and go "far hence to the Gentiles" It was not that he loved them less, but the risen and glorified Jesus of Nazareth more, that his missionary labors had been among alien people. Paul's justification of his entire life and work rested upon the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and His enthronement as sovereign Lord of His blood-bought Church. He had gone to the

Gentile world, because to that world he had been sent by One who "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," and whose commands he and they alike must ever obey

The brave, true words were all in vain. The bigoted and fanatical multitude would not hear of any mission of mercy to the Gentile world They closed their ears, and lifted up their voices in burning hate against the prisoner on the stairs, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live." With every manifestation of fury they cast off their garments for a battle even with the temple guard, and threw dust in the air, in the excess of their impotent rage, till the chiliarch removed his prisoner from the hands of violence, and brought him into the safe precincts of the castle.

Verses 18-19 The Lord's choice of our field of labor may be wholly different from ours Obedience, not questioning, is our duty—Vs 22 The blindness of bigotry

Vss 17-21 PAUL'S SECOND VISION

I The place,—in the temple
II The season,—while praying
III The form,—in a trance
IV The subject,—the commission—(*The Homilist*)

SECTION 3—*Before the Chief Captain, vss 22 23-29*

23 And as they cried out, and threw off their garments, and cast dust into the air, 24 the chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, bidding that he should be examined by scourging that he might know for what cause they so shouted against him 25 And when they had tied him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned? 26 And when the centurion heard it, he went to the chief captain and told him, saying, What art thou about to do? for this man is a Roman

27 And the chief captain came and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? And he said, Yea 28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this citizenship And Paul said, But I am a Roman born. 29 They then that were about to examine him straightway departed from him and the chief captain also was afraid when he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him

1 The assertion of rights,—vss 23-26. 2 The power of a name,—vss. 27-29

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1. *The assertion of rights,—vss 23-26.*

Paul was safe from the hands of the raging mob, but he was still in the hands of a brutal soldiery The chiliarch had listened to Paul's story on the stairs, but it had been to him in an unknown tongue Apparently he had understood nothing, and the sudden and terrific outburst of hatred and violence must have been an enigma to him. He must get at the truth by examining the prisoner himself and the only way known to either the civil or military jurisprudence of that day for getting at the truth was by scourging and torture And so Paul, defenceless and lone, manacled and shackled still, is stripped of his upper garments, and bound with thongs to the leaning post, that on his naked back the lictors may lay, with cruel energy, their terrible rods, that the truth may be extracted from his unwilling lips It was an outrageous indignity, and Paul will not submit to it With the ever potent cry,—"Civis Romanus sum,"—"I am a Roman citizen,"—he takes shelter under the imperial eagle, and scatters his tormentors in hasty and terrified flight, because they had dared even so much as to prepare for beating the bound but sacred person of a Roman citizen, unheard and uncondemned

The centurion first takes the alarm and reports his finding to his superior officer The chiliarch, with trembling and haste, seeks of the prisoner confirmation of his right to such immunity as he claimed He did not have long to seek He knew the privileges of Roman citizenship, and the penalties attached to any false claim His doubts were soon resolved, and he is satisfied when the prisoner in chains boldly and confidently asserts, "I am a Roman born"

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2 *The power of a name,—vss. 27-29*

Paul had come to a crisis in his career He is no longer in the power of his malignant countrymen. Henceforth, till his appeal is heard by Cæsar, he is not a renegade Jew but a citizen

of Rome And, from that interview in the castle till he is handed over to the custody of Burrhus in the Roman Prætorium, Paul is treated with marked courtesy and consideration by all the Roman officials with whom he has to do. It was the power of a great name Throughout the world-wide empire it had been ordained that the person of a Roman citizen should be sacred He could not be bound or scourged uncondemned, and his appeal, though he might be the most obscure citizen of the most distant province of the empire, must be carried at whatever cost to the palace of the Cæsars It was a great privilege Paul had but once before invoked its protection, but now, at the psychological moment,—when his missionary work is ended, and he is beginning his witness to Jesus of Nazareth as a prisoner in chains,—he invokes the protection of the imperial power, and claims the rights of Roman citizenship

Did Paul's assertion of his rights manifest any want of faith in the care and keeping of the risen Nazarene? We think not We believe in the use of means Paul had the assurance of the Divine care, and that he should bear witness to his gracious Master in the imperial capital But as God appointed the end through human instrumentalities, so Paul believed it right to attain the end desired and ordained by the use of the appointed instrumentalities Just because he trusted God and believed in the Divine intervention, therefore with confidence he claimed the rights of Roman citizenship, and invoked the power of that puissant name

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Verse 28 The world resounds with the assertion of rights, religion is vocal with the obligations of duty—Vs 29 Sometimes duty demands the claim of rights, and he is derelict who does not assert himself for the honor of his Divine Master and the advancement of his cause among men.

SECTION 4—PAUL'S LAST TESTIMONY IN JERUSALEM,—VSS 22 30——23.35

SUB-SECTION 1—*Before the Council,—vss 22 30——23 11*

30 But on the morrow, desiring to know the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him, and commanded the chief priests and all the council to come together, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

23:1 And Paul, looking steadfastly on the council, said, Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day 2 And the high priest commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth 3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall· and sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? 4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? 5 And Paul said, I knew not, brethren, that he was high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees he cried out in the Council, Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees, touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees confess both 9 And there arose a great clamor and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' part stood up, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man and what if a spirit hath spoken to him, or an angel? 10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the castle

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou also bear witness at Rome

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1 *The meeting of the Sanhedrin,—vs 30* 2 *Paul and Ananias,—vss 23 1–5* 3. *The divided court,—vss 6–10* 4 *Divine encouragement,—vs 11*

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1. *The meeting of the Sanhedrin,—vs 30.*

This assembly was convened by command of the Roman chiliarch. Ordinarily we may suppose this High Court of the Jews would not have been disposed to acknowledge the right of any foreigner to govern the movements of their august body But they were quite willing to concede a point, if they might get summary judgment on this renegade Jew

And the motive which actuated the chief captain in convoking this assembly was entirely praiseworthy. He would do justice to all parties; but he had been unable to do so up to this time, because, Paul's stairway speech having been to him in an unknown tongue, he had been left in the dark both as to the charges brought against the prisoner, and the nature and conclusiveness of his defence. He

will not again expose the prisoner to the violence of the mob; but will hear what the official representatives of Israel have to say against him. So he brings Paul down from the castle, and sets him before the Council The meeting seems not to have been held within the precincts of the temple, as the Roman's presence would have been a profanation of the Holy House And the proceedings seem also to have been in the Greek tongue, certainly not in the vernacular Aramaic or Hebrew, otherwise the chiliarch might have been as much nonplussed as he had been on the castle-stairs, through his inability to understand the language spoken

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2 *Paul and Ananias,—vss. 23 1–5*

The most cursory reading of this passage can hardly fail to lead us to suspect that we have here only a fragmentary report of what was said at this memorable meeting of the Jewish Council It does not seem as if Paul's well-known courtesy and gentlemanly breeding would have permitted him, after a searching scrutiny of the Venerable Court, to break out upon them with this solemn asseveration of his conscientiousness,—"Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day" The abruptness and earnestness of the words lead us instinctively to feel that we have here neither the beginning nor the ending of the conference, and that the annalist has written only that which was most essential to the continuity of his chronicle And it was in the midst of the examination that Paul makes this extraordinary claim, and the high priest gives the unwarranted command to smite the prisoner on the mouth It was the unjust word of an irascible and domineering spirit, and it provoked the quick and just resentment of the defenceless prisoner.

We cannot find it in our hearts to censure Paul for his hot reply. Some writers, indeed, think his words were hasty and ill-advised, and say Paul showed little of "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." They forget that even "the gentle Jesus" was ever deeply stirred by oppression and abuse of power, and blazed forth in severest arraignment of the hypocrites, who "devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers" Paul's anger was

quick and hot, but short-lived The sun did not go down upon his wrath. And he was quick to apologize But it is to be observed that he did not apologize for what he said, but for saying it to the official priestly head of his people The fact, as he stated it, must stand It was a judge of the law who had commanded him to be smitten contrary to law. This was an injustice and an oppression, and it encounters the prisoner's just rebuke Paul has no mind to take back what he had said But he will honor the office, while protesting against the tyranny of the officer The prisoner does not seem to have known who the officer was, his purblind vision probably hindering a clear view of the personnel of the Court, but instantly, on learning his name and authority, he bows to his power, and finds Scripture for his obedience And so this episode ends as Paul perceives more clearly the composition of the Court

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Verse 1 The function of conscience,—not always a safe guide—Vs 2 Self-control a necessary qualification for a judge—Vs 5 Respect for authority

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3 *The divided Court,—vss 6–10*

It did not take the vigilant apostle long to discover that, as formerly when he was himself a member, two parties divided the Great Synagogue With the doctrinal position of one side he was in substantial sympathy To this fact he appeals in his defence,—"Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees, touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" Was this appeal a trick of Paul to divide the court, and win a temporary triumph? We cannot believe that Paul would condescend to any such artifice That division and confusion resulted from what the prisoner said is true, but Paul had far deeper ends to subserve It was the missionary's last testimony to the official representatives of his fellow-countrymen As before in Corinth he shook out his garments against the Jews, to whom he ministered no more, and turned to the Gentiles, so here, voicing his last testimony to Israel, he centers their interest and his defence upon the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth For we must believe that, as his manner is, Luke gives us but a glance at the happenings of that

day in the Council Chamber And surely Paul would not let slip the opportunity to give his full and solemn testimony to the fundamental fact, which he had been commissioned to witness to the peoples in all the empire, both Jews and Gentiles, to whom he had been sent So the voice of the missionary evangelist is heard no more by his people in Jerusalem, and from the roar and tumult of contending factions the messenger, "that bringeth good tidings," is safely withdrawn to the fastnesses of the castle.

Verse 8b Holding the truth in unrighteousness—Vs 9 Losing the lesson of immortality in quarreling about the fact

Vs 9 ENMITY AGAINST GOD

I In what way men fight against God
 1 When they hate and abuse His people
 2 When they restrain and silence His ministers
 3 In their enmity against the truth
 4 In dissatisfaction with, and resistance to, God's providences
 5 In resisting conviction

II The guilt and danger of such conduct
 1 It proceeds from ignorance
 2 It is vain and futile
 3 The issue will be fatal
 4 Let us rather be reconciled, and not fight against God
 5 If not thus reconciled, the contest will have no end

(*The Preacher*)

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4 *Divine encouragement,—vs 11*

Paul rests safely beneath the shield of Rome Does he sleep? After such a day and fruitless testimony can his spirit find repose? It would seem not Paul could not be blind to the probability that his last words had been spoken to his kindred according to the flesh It must have been profoundly saddening that his evangelistic career should thus end in scenes of turmoil and strife And we can well imagine Paul, with his exquisite sensibilities, lying down in a felon's cell under great depression of spirits But, though forsaken of men and despised, he is not forgotten by his gracious Lord. And that night that Lord stood by him with words of

peace, encouragement and comfort,—"Be of good cheer· as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." It was "a word in season to him that was weary," and by it Paul was girded anew with strength for the long and trying days of captivity, and weary waiting in monotonous inactivity.

Verse 11 We are immortal till our work is done

SUB-SECTION 2—*The Conspiracy,—vss 12-35*

12 And when it was day, the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul 13 And they were more than forty that made this conspiracy 14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse to taste nothing until we have killed Paul 15 Now therefore do ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you, as though ye would judge of his case more exactly· and we, before he comes near, are ready to slay him

16 But Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, and he came and entered into the castle and told Paul 17 And Paul called unto him one of the centurions, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain, for he hath something to tell him 18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and saith, Paul, the prisoner, called me unto him, and asked me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say to thee 19 And the chief captain took him by the hand, and, going aside, asked him privately, What is it that thou hast to tell me? 20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to ask thee to bring down Paul to-morrow unto the council, as though thou wouldest inquire somewhat more exactly concerning him 21 Do not thou therefore yield unto them for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, who have bound themselves under a curse neither to eat nor to drink till they have slain him and now they are ready, looking for the promise from thee 22 So the chief captain let the young man go, charging him, Tell no man that thou hast signified these things to me

23 And he called unto him two of the centurions, and said, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go as far as Cæsarea, and horsemen three score and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night· 24 and he bade them provide beasts, that they might set Paul thereon, and bring him safe unto Felix, the governor 25 And he wrote a letter after this form 26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix, greeting 27 This man was seized by the Jews, and was about to be slain of them, when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a

Roman. 28 And, desiring to know the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him down unto their council 29 whom I found to be accused about questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds 30 And when it was shown to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to thee forthwith, charging his accusers also to speak against him before thee 31 So the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris 32 But on the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: 33 and they, when they came to Cæsarea and delivered the letter to the governor, presented Paul also before him 34 And, when he had read it, he asked of what province he was, and when he understood that he was of Cilicia, 35 I will hear thee fully, said he, when thine accusers are also come· and he commanded him to be kept in Herod's palace

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1. *The conspiracy concocted,—vss 12–15* 2 *The conspiracy discovered,—vss 16–22* 3 *The conspiracy thwarted,—vss 23–35.*

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1. *The conspiracy concocted,—vss 12–15.*

We willingly yield to the impression that the originators of this new diabolism must have been thugs and cut-throats,—"lewd fellows of the baser sort" But we are obliged to go further While the plot did not come to a head, and we cannot say positively how far those high in authority would have gone in conniving at this atrocious villainy of abandoned men, we cannot resist the belief that they approved the scheme, and, if it had been actually carried out, it would have been a fitting expression of their undying hatred of the great missionary apostle

And, if we inquire why Paul continued to be the object of such bitter, unrelenting and deadly opposition, the answer must be found in such particulars as these, viz —(1) The destructive influence of Paul's fundamental teaching upon the whole life of ceremonialism to which the Jewish people were so wedded.—(2) The opposition of the natural heart to the principle of salvation by free grace through faith in Jesus of Nazareth Less than six months had elapsed since Paul had expounded this fundamental tenet of the Gospel in his great letter to the Church at Rome; and many of the Jews in Jerusalem were doubtless acquainted with its sweeping and exclusive provisions, as he everywhere had preached what he there wrote.—(3) But more than all else, it must be said,

the opposition of the Jews, in its terrible intensity, can be fully accounted for only on the ground of their judicial blindness and abandonment by the God of their fathers But a few years were to pass away before the storm of fire and blood would sweep over the entire land and in less than a dozen years Jerusalem would be overthrown in the midst of such calamities as the world had never witnessed The nation was judicially hardened, and in the blindness of their hatred of the truth the people were rushing on to the precipice of overwhelming destruction

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Verse 12 The short-sightedness of wickedness,—the removal of Paul by the hand of violence would not have stopped the progress of the Gospel — Vs 13 The imprecations of an oath are trifles to men with murder in their hearts We may be sure the forty conspirators did not die of starvation because their plan to kill Paul did not succeed

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2 *The conspiracy discovered,—vss 16–22.*

The carefully arranged plan of these conspirators, and the simple instrumentality by which it was brought to light, open up fruitful lines of thought We are set to wondering about Paul's family, and come to realize how little we know of his kindred That his parents belonged to the sect of the Pharisees we know That they were in comfortable temporal circumstances we have reason to believe, for, if not, they could hardly have sent their son, while yet a lad, up to Jerusalem to be further taught by the renowned Gamaliel His father was evidently a man of high character and wide influence in Tarsus, and for some signal service to the state had been invested with the rights and privileges of Roman citizenship And these rights and privileges were made hereditary in his family, and belonged to his household as well as to himself.

In that household was a sister, who shared her brother's Roman citizenship, and doubtless like him before his conversion was passionately devoted to Judaism. She naturally found her way to Jerusalem in due time, and seems to have been living there at the time of her brother's arrest. She was a married woman, and it was through her son that the plottings of Paul's enemies were

brought to naught We can hardly believe that this sister was a Christian If she had been, it would have seemed more natural for her brother Paul to lodge at her house rather than Mnason's when he came to Jerusalem on that 17th of May And, besides, if she had been a Nazarene, it is not likely that she or her son could have become cognizant of the schemes of the forty oath-bound conspirators But the claims of natural affection prevailed over the bigotry of Jewish fanaticism, and though Paul was dead to his Jewish kindred and his name had long since been cast out as evil and accursed, his sister or his sister's son could not sit idly by and see him fall a victim to the pitiless wiles of wicked men. And so that sister's son brought tidings to the prisoner in the castle of the danger which confronted him

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Verse 16 The weakest instrumentalities are in God's hand most mighty in effecting good results

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3 *The conspiracy thwarted,—vss 23–35*

The chiliarch of Jerusalem seems to have come to entertain a high regard for his prisoner, and this fact, with the further fact that it was his official duty to safeguard the persons and rights of those committed to his custody, explain the soldierly promptitude with which he immediately concerted measures to head off the machinations of Paul's malignant foes A little army of four hundred and seventy legionaries, horsemen and spearmen, with beasts for the prisoner to ride on, are made ready, and file out of the fortress of Antonia at 9 o'clock the same night, to carry the apostle away from the hatred and violence of his fellow countrymen, that in due time he may confront his accusers before the governor. The night ride of forty miles brought them in the early morning to Antipatris; and thence onward for twenty-five miles further the seventy horsemen convoyed the prisoner to Cæsarea and to Felix, to whom Lysias consigned him with a letter of commendation

This letter, the only specimen of its kind in the New Testament, is interesting in that it gives us the official view of Paul's case as it appeared to a Roman officer, and is the first judgment in favor of his release, as having done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. And while it shows the fair-mindedness of the chiliarch, inciden-

tally it shows also an inclination to stretch the truth in the assumption of a worthy motive in what he had done. He had rescued Paul because he had understood that he was a Roman,—which, as a matter of fact, was not true He discovered Paul's citizenship not before but after he had rescued him.

The Roman governor gave the apostle a brief preliminary audience; and, learning that he was a Cilician, promised him a full hearing as soon as his accusers were come So Paul rested in Herod's Prætorium

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Verse 23 It is sometimes best for a general to decline the gage of battle, and to withdraw his forces to a more advantageous position. The chiliarch did wisely in sending Paul to Felix, rather than seek to defend him from the fanatical Jews in Jerusalem

Vs 35 Paul at Cæsarea

I At the end of his second missionary journey
II At the close of his missionary activity
III As a prisoner in the hands of the Romans

Section 5—Paul beforf Felix,—vss 24 1–27

1 And after five days the high priest Ananias came down, with certain elders, and with an orator, one Tertullus, and they informed the governor against Paul 2 And when he was called, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy much peace, and that by thy providence evils are corrected for this nation, 3 we accept it in all ways and in all places, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness 4 But, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I entreat thee to hear us of thy clemency a few words. 5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes 6 who moreover assayed to profane the temple, on whom also we laid hold, 8 from whom thou wilt be able, by examining him thyself, to take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him 9 And the Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that these things were so 10 And when the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, Paul answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I cheerfully make my defence 11 seeing that thou canst take knowledge that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem. 12 and neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city 13 Neither can they prove to thee the things whereof they accuse me 14 But this I confess unto thee, that, after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which

are written in the prophets, 15 having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection, both of the just and the unjust 16 Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men always 17 Now, after some years, I came to bring alms to my nation and offerings amidst which they found me purified in the temple, with no crowd, nor yet with tumult but there were certain Jews from Asia—19 who ought to have been here before thee, and to make accusation, if they had aught against me 20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrong-doing they found when I stood before the council, 21 except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question before you this day 22 But Felix, having more exact knowledge concerning the Way, deferred them, saying, When Lysias, the chief captain, shall come down, I will determine your matter. 23 And he gave order to the centurion that he should be kept in charge, and should have indulgence, and not to forbid any of his friends to minister unto him

24 But, after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ 25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me 26 He hoped withal that money would be given him of Paul wherefore also he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him 27 But when two years were fulfilled Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in bonds

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1 *His public hearing,—vss 1–23* 2 *His private testimony,—vss 24–27*

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1. *His public hearing,—vss 1–23.*

Events were moving rapidly with the apostle just now. He had reached Jerusalem from his last four years' missionary journey on the 17th of May; and it was not yet the 1st of June ("Not more than twelve days, etc."—Vs. 11), when he was called to plead to the charges against him before the Roman governor. Ananias and certain of the elders had come down from Jerusalem to prosecute the case against Paul They availed themselves of the services of a professional advocate to formulate the charges against the prisoner at the bar. Dismissing Tertullus' fulsome exordium, and coming at once to the gravamen of the indictment, we cannot but be astonished at the flimsiness of the charges. They were

three, viz—(1) Paul was a pestilent fellow, and mover of insurrections among the Jews throughout the world (2) He was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes And (3) He had essayed to profane the temple

The most cursory examination of these charges will show how little there was in them. Only one had any basis of fact to sustain it, that was the second, and to this, as we shall see, Paul pleads guilty. The first charge is presented in general terms to make an impression of something very serious. Throughout the entire world the prisoner had been a fomentor of disorder and rebellion,—which was totally false And, even if it had been true, Felix had no jurisdiction beyond his own province, and it was vain to bolster up a weak cause by roaming the world to gather up and cite other indefinite and unsupported instances of pernicious activity Then, as to the third charge, it is notable that Tertullus does not allege any actual profanation of the Holy Temple, because it could be easily established that there had been no call for a purification of the polluted sanctuary, and evidently therefore the Jews themselves did not believe that it had been profaned So the advocate had to content himself with simply charging that Paul had attempted to do this terrible thing.

The apostle, being given permission to speak, enters an emphatic denial *in toto* of the first and third charges preferred by the counsel for the prosecution In rebuttal of the first, he confines himself, as was perfectly proper, to his course of life while under the governor's jurisdiction, and declares that "neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man, or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city" As to the third charge he is equally explicit and emphatic He had just the week before come up to Jerusalem, bringing alms to his countrymen, and offerings in their Holy House, in the midst of which "they found me" not profaning the temple, but "purified, with no crowd, nor yet with tumult."

Paul's answer to the second charge calls for a more specific and careful examination. In substance he admits the truth of the accusation He does not indeed claim to be a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; but he confesses to the governor that "after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers." But even in this he claimed to be walking in the footsteps of the

fathers, "believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets." And emphasizing the motive of such a life gives him the coveted opportunity to proclaim the glorious doctrine of the resurrection, of which he had been ordained a witness, "having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust" At first glance it seems surprising that the deputation sent to prosecute the case against Paul should have been chosen from the Pharisaic portion of the Sanhedrin Further reflection, however, may lead us to believe that the apostle's enemies were shrewd enough to see that it might prejudice their cause to send as prosecutors those who were known to be the opponents of the prisoner's views, as he had expressed them in the council, and as he continued to express them before the governor In believing the truth of the resurrection, and living the life of a faithful witness to that great fact, he is bold to claim before the governor, what he had declared before the Great Synagogue,—"Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always"

In closing his defence Paul challenges his prosecutors to bring any proof whatever of the indictment to which he is pleading, and dares them to put a finger upon a single act of wrongdoing on his part, even when he stood before the council, and they were searching his record, "except it be," he says, "for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question before you this day" We have already seen reason to believe that Paul's use of this language was no trick designed to stampede the Court and secure a favorable verdict (see Chap. 23 6–10). And his present reference to the matter cannot be interpreted as in any sense a confession that he had possibly done wrong on that occasion But in this way Paul serves notice on his accusers, and on the presiding judge as well, that there could be no adequate consideration of his case that did not traverse the testimony to the resurrection of the dead, founded on the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth

It was evident to the governor that the determination of the case so far must turn upon the veracity of the parties at the bar. But Paul was one, his accusers were many. It is charitable to believe that Felix was somewhat prepossessed in favor of the

prisoner; and he would give him the benefit of any corroborating testimony. So he defers any decision till he could hear what the chiliarch of Jerusalem had to say. Meanwhile Paul is to be treated as a Roman prisoner. "And he gave order to the centurion that he should be kept in charge, and should have indulgence; and not to forbid any of his friends to minister unto him"

Verse 1. Paul and Tertullus,—true and false eloquence contrasted

Vss 14-16. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN

I What he believes —"All things written in the Scriptures"
II. What he confesses —The hope of the resurrection
III What characterizes his life —Keeping a conscience void of offence toward God and man

Vs. 16 CONSCIENCE.

I. Ignorant
II. Sleeping
III. Erring
IV. Seared

Vs 24. THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

I. It was a *moral* impossibility that Christ should be holden of death
II It was a *natural* necessity that Jesus should rise from the dead
(*Canon, Rev. Dr. F.*)

Vs 16 THE CHRISTIAN ASCETIC.

I. "Herein"
II "Exercise myself"
(The word is the root of "ascetic")
III. "Conscience"
IV. Constant watchfulness in living such a life "toward God and men"
(*Vaughn, Rev Dr. J. C*)

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2. *His private testimony,—vss. 24-27.*

This Paul had an opportunity to give, while awaiting the resumption of the public hearing. The Herods were, without exception, a cruel and profligate race? There ran in the blood a strange mixture of wickedness and superstition, unblushing defiance of God's law, and curiosity about any reported manifestation of the

supernatural. Herod Agrippa, the Great, was for a time under the strange though not saving influence of the fiery preacher of the wilderness, John the Baptist His son, Herod Antipas, willingly united with Pilate in sending Jesus to Calvary; but he was glad to see him and hoped to see some wonder-work wrought by him. It was probably the same spirit of unspiritual curiosity that led the profligate Drusilla, a Herod of a succeeding generation, though living in shameless adultery with the Roman governor, to desire to hear the renowned prisoner now in Herod's Prætorium. The report of his teaching and works had doubtless gone abroad through the world; and this abandoned Jewess and her licentious paramour were curious to hear what such a man would say, and possibly see what he could do in the realm of the supernatural.

So Paul is summoned to appear before the Roman governor and his mistress; and they "heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus" It was a great opportunity for faithful dealing with the interests of immortal souls, and Paul does not shrink from the task The pertinent themes, which he so boldly dwelt upon, made a striking, though transient, impression upon the governor "As he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified." What impression was made upon Drusilla is not stated She was apparently more hardened than Felix. Though in a city full of memories of her father, and in close proximity to the theater in which the stroke of Divine Vengeance had fallen upon him, her heart seemed more impervious to the word of warning than that of her paramour; and it was his voice not hers that called for a stay in the hearing, and the dismissal of the preacher with the procrastinating reply, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call thee unto me" The convenient season for hearing the saving message never again came to the Roman governor. He sent for Paul, indeed, again and again, but in doing so he was actuated only by mercenary motives. He had the impression that Paul had money, or through influential friends could command large resources; and he courted the opportunity to receive a bribe, and set his prisoner at liberty. Two years passed away; the public hearing in the presence of the chiliarch of Jerusalem is never resumed; Felix is superseded, and Paul is left a prisoner in bonds. The procrastinating governor disappears from history, while Drusilla and the son

of their adulterous connection, nineteen years later, perish in an eruption of Vesuvius!

Vs 25 Paul's Sermon.

I Of righteousness
II Of self-control
III Of the judgment to come

Vss 24-27. Felix.

Why so many take no deep interest in religion
I Because they are not willing to break with their sinful past
II Because they are not willing to entertain the thought of a coming judgment
III Because they are waiting for a convenient season

Vs 25 Procrastination.

I. The explanation of it
II The mistake of it

Vs 25 A Convenient Season

I Why the procrastination of so many
II The sin, folly and danger of it

Vs 25 The Danger of Delay in Conversion

I You may not live
II There are no promises for the future
III You will have many absorbing cares
IV. You may never again feel like becoming a Christian

Vss 1-27 Paul Before Felix

Christianity in contact with a corrupt heart
I. The truth here enforced
II The natural effect of such truth
III The manner in which the impression of such truth is warded off.
(*Barnes, Rev Dr Albert*)

Vs 25 Delay in Religion

I The plea of delay is fraught with guilt
II. The plea of delay is delusive
III The plea of delay is dangerous—(*Dewey, Rev Orrville*)

Vs 25 PAUL'S SERMON TO FELIX AND DRUSILLA

I An enlightened preacher who discovers due discernment in the selection of his subjects
II A conscience appalled and confounded on the recollection of its crimes, and of that awful judgment where they must be judged
III A sinner alarmed, but not converted,—a sinner who desires to be saved, but delays his conversion—(*Saurin, Rev Jacques*)

Vs 25 THE CHOICE AND CONDUCT OF FELIX A WARNING TO ANXIOUS SOULS

I The path which men feeling the movements of the Spirit ought to pursue
II The danger, presumption, and sinfulness of such a course as Felix pursued
III The necessity of your giving heed to the things of your peace now. (*Smith, Rev Walter.*)

Vs 25 PAUL'S SERMON BEFORE FELIX

I An appropriate sermon
II An affected audience
III A lamentable disappointment—(*Spurgeon, Rev Charles H*)

Vs 25 PAUL REASONING BEFORE FELIX

I The manner in which Paul preached
II The topics on which he preached
III The effect of his preaching—(*Auld, Rev William*)

Vs 25 PREACHER AND HEARER.

I An exemplary preacher
1 Practical in his topics
2 Logical in his style
3 Personal in his application
4 Bold in his manner
II A procrastinating hearer
1 Parried conviction of guilt
2 Secret purpose of amendment
3 Infatuated delay of reformation—(*The Homilist*)

Vs. 25 Paul Preaching before Felix

I Although Felix and Drusilla sent for Paul that he might discourse concerning the faith in Christ it does not appear to have been concerning this faith that the apostle chiefly spoke
II The effect of the sermon upon Drusilla was nothing, but Felix trembled (*Melvill, Rev. Henry*)

Vs. 25 Paul before Felix

I No faithful minister of the Gospel will accommodate his preaching to the tastes and wishes of his hearers, at the expense of God's truth.
II It is the part of a faithful minister to address the understanding and conscience
III A Christian minister may often find it necessary to insist on moral duties as well as Gospel truths
IV. When the Gospel is thus faithfully preached it will produce anxiety and alarm in the bosoms of wicked men
V The folly and danger of procrastination in the concerns of the soul, when the sinner is thus awakened —(*Spring, Rev Dr. Gardner*)

Vs. 25 The Lash of the Law

I Waiting for the sermon
II The appropriate sermon
III. The effect of the sermon —(*Hastings, Rev Dr James*)

Vs. 25 The Gospel True to the Moral Convictions of Men

I The most successful method of imparting a knowledge of divine truth to the human understanding is to present it under its various adaptations to the persons and circumstances of the inquirers
II Men are seldom found so depraved and reprobate as to have lost all susceptibility to the power of Gospel truth
III Under the convictions of an awakened conscience sinners become truly concerned for the safety of their souls, and are prepared to listen to those teachings which it is the aim of the Gospel to impart (*Smith, Rev Pres't Worthington.*)

Vs 25 A Trembling Sinner

I. Felix trembled, not because of Paul, but because of what Paul said
II Felix trembled, not because Paul was eloquent, but because God was just
1 What Paul preached was *practical* truth.
2 It was also *pointed* truth
3 It was *most solemn* truth
4 It was *divine* truth.

III Felix trembled, not because Paul proved that God was just, but because his own conscience admitted it

1 Conscience makes a coward of every sinner the moment it is aroused.

2 Conscience is always an ally, in the sinner's heart, on the side of the Gospel.

3. If under the pressure of conscience a man does no more than tremble, his trembling will not avail to save his soul

(*Robinson, Rev Dr. Charles S.*)

Vs 25 THE CONVENIENT SEASON

I. The details of the incident

II The instruction of the same

1 What Felix's answer concedes

(1) That he was clearly enlightened.

(2) That he was divinely drawn

2 What did Felix imply?

(1) That proscrastination quiets down every emotion into apathy and indifference

(2) That procrastination renders human passion more and more inveterate by its own act

(3) That procrastination uses up time, out of which the new life is to be made

3 What did Felix assume?

That everything can wait on his convenience

Two mistakes in this,—

(1) That anyone's salvation is of more importance to God than to himself

(2) Supposes the Gospel offer stands always open

(*Robinson, Rev Dr. Charles S.*)

SECTION 6—*Paul before Festus,—vss 25 1-12*

1 Festus, therefore, having come into the province, after three days went up to Jerusalem from Cæsarea 2 And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul, and they besought him, 3 asking a favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying a plot to kill him on the way

4 Howbeit Festus answered that Paul was kept in charge at Cæsarea, and that he himself was about to depart thither shortly 5 Let them, therefore, saith he, that are of power among you go down with me, and, if there is anything amiss in the man, let them accuse him

6 And, when he had tarried among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down unto Cæsarea, and on the morrow he sat on the judgment seat, and commanded Paul to be brought 7 And, when he was come, the

Jews that had come down from Jerusalem stood round about him, bringing against him many and grievous charges which they could not prove, 8 while Paul said in his defence, Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Cæsar have I sinned at all 9 But Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

10 But Paul said, I am standing before Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged. to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest 11 If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die, but if none of those things is true whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them I appeal unto Cæsar 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Thou hast appealed unto Cæsar unto Cæsar shalt thou go

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1 *The Jews' request,—vss 1-3* 2 *The governor's response—vss 4-5* 3 *The second hearing,—vss 6-9* 4 *The prisoner's appeal,—vss. 10-12*

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1 *The Jews' request,—vss. 1-3*

The new governor was a better man than Felix, and entered upon the administration of the affairs of his province with commendable diligence and seeming purpose to execute justice Three days after his arrival in the provincial capital he is in Jerusalem, and there meets the request of Paul's enemies As a matter of favor to them they desired him to bring Paul back to Jerusalem, ostensibly to be tried not indeed by them but by the governor and in their presence, and apparently where their witnesses could be easily secured. The request seemed reasonable, but it was only a pretext. The real purpose of the chief priests was to accomplish the plot of two years before, and by means of the sicarii to waylay and assassinate him on the road. and this seems conclusive evidence that they were guiltily involved with the oath-bound conspirators of Lysias' administration

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2. *The governor's response,—vss 4-5.*

Whether Festus suspected the designs of the Jews or not does not appear from Luke's narrative It seems probable that he did.

At any rate, he refused to grant their petition Paul was a prisoner of Rome, under guard in Cæsarea, whither he himself expected to return soon, and some of their influential men should go down with him, and if there was anything amiss with the prisoner it would soon be discovered through their accusations, and a trial before a lawful tribunal.

This is Luke's statement of Festus' answer From his report of the governor's words to Agrippa (vs. 16) we get the impression that Festus was very positive in his refusal, and gave the best of reasons for his course They wanted sentence against Paul, Festus says to Agrippa, "to whom I answered, that it is not the custom of the Romans to give up any man, before the accused have the accusers face to face, and have had opportunity to make his defence concerning the matter laid against him" The governor's words give us a high opinion of Roman justice, and of the equitable procedure in Roman courts, and at the same time give us the impression that he knew the Jews really wanted to get Paul into their hands, not for trial, but for condemnation and even destruction without trial

Again Paul's enemies are foiled in their designs against him; and reluctantly they have to appear before the governor in Cæsarea, with their trivial and groundless charges against the apostle.

Verses 4-5 and 16 The theoretical perfection of Roman jurisprudence

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3 *The second hearing,—vss 6-9*

The Jews do not again avail themselves of the services of the orator Tertullus, or any other paid advocate But it soon appears that they have nothing new to allege against Paul. When he was brought before Festus, seated on the judgment-seat, his accusers "stood round about him bringing against him many and grievous charges, which they could not prove" What those charges were in detail Luke does not tell us From the prisoner's answer we have reason to believe that they were substantially what they had alleged before Felix. Paul says, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Cæsar, have I sinned at

all"; and in this single sentence denies the three-fold charge made now by his enemies before Festus, as formerly before Felix, of "heresy, sacrilege and rebellion."

Manifestly, in the judgment of the governor, there is no case against Paul. But Festus was a politician. He knew that Felix had fallen before the ill-will of the Jewish people; and he was naturally anxious to avoid the snares which led to the overthrow of his predecessor. "And, desiring to gain favor with the Jews," Festus addresses Paul in the strange and apparently unexpected question,—"Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?" It seemed like an entire change of front on the part of the governor. It had this plausible foundation, that, as now appeared. these were more ecclesiastical than political questions, and they might be more properly settled by an ecclesiastical than a civil court But Paul was quick enough to see that this would deliver him into the hands of his enemies, even if a trial should ever come off. He could save himself only in one way. This explains the course he took, as unexpected to Judge and court as the governor's question had been to him

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Verse 8. The impregnable defences of simple truth

4. *The prisoner's appeal,—vss. 10–12.*

With dignity and serenity of spirit Paul answers the governor, "I am standing before Cæsar's judgment-seat, where," as a Roman citizen, "I ought to be judged" The charges which these Jews allege against me are known to the governer to be trivial and baseless; and to transfer my case from this Roman tribunal to the judgment of the Jewish Sanhedrin would be a travesty of justice, against which I am bound to enter my most solemn protest. If I have violated any law of the empire, I am ready to pay with my life the forfeit of my crime. But if the sum of my villainy is in the baseless allegations of my accusers, no one, not even the presiding judge in this tribunal, may justly deliver me into their hands. And having no recourse to prevent it, if such be the mind of the governor, I am constrained to carry my case from under his jurisdiction to a higher court,—"I appeal unto Cæsar."

Thus by one master-stroke Paul delivers himself from all the machinations of his Jewish foes, and the needless concessions of a subservient judge. All proceedings against him are stayed. The prisoner is remanded unto the hearing of Augustus; and the chief priests again return to Jerusalem, chagrined and disappointed over the failure of this their supreme effort to reach and destroy their renegade countryman They soon had enough to do in the calamities that were fast coming upon the Holy City. We have no knowledge that they ever appeared to prosecute their charge against Paul before Nero's tribunal.

Verses 10-11 Standing upon one's rights is sometimes a sacred duty.

Vss 1-12 PAUL BEFORE FESTUS.

I. The manner in which Festus regarded religious questions,—as pertaining to others, not himself, or as being trivial

II Reasons why religion should not be so regarded —

1. Man has a real interest in it
2 He is bound to meet its requirements
3 He needs its provisions
4 He must perish if destitute of it—(*Barnes, Rev. Dr Albert*)

SECTION 7—*Paul before Agrippa,—25 13——26 32*

13 Now when certain days were passed Agrippa, the king, and Bernice arrived at Cæsarea, and saluted Festus 14 And, as they tarried there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, 15 about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews informed me, asking for sentence against him 16 To whom I answered, that it is not the custom of the Romans to give up any man, before that the accused have the accusers face to face, and have had opportunity to make his defence concerning the matter laid against him 17 When therefore they were come together here, I made no delay, but on the next day sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded the man to be brought. 18 Concerning whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought no charge of such evil things as I supposed, 19 but had certain questions against him of their own religion, and of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive 20 And I, being perplexed how to inquire concerning these things, asked whether he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these matters 21 But when Paul had appealed to be kept for the decision of the emperor, I commanded him to be kept till I should send him to Cæsar. 22 And Agrippa

said unto Festus, I also could wish to hear the man myself To-morrow, saith he, thou shalt hear him

23 So on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and they were entered into the place of hearing with the chief captains and the principal men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in 24 And Festus saith, King Agrippa, and all men who are here present with us, ye behold this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews made suit to me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer 25 But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death and, as he himself appealed to the emperor, I determined to send him 26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, King Agrippa, that, after examination had, I may have somewhat to write 27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not withal to signify the charges against him

26 1 And Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself Then Paul stretched forth his hand, and made his defence 2 I think myself happy, King Agrippa, that I am to make my defence before thee this day, touching all the things whereof I am accused by the Jews 3 especially because thou art expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently 4 My manner of life, then, from my youth up, which was from the beginning among mine own nation and at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, 5 having knowledge of me from the first, if they be willing to testify, that after the straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee 6 And now I stand here to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers, 7 unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain And concerning this hope I am accused by the Jews, O king! 8 Why is it judged incredible with you if God doth raise the dead? 9 I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth 10 And this I also did in Jerusalem and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and, when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them 11 And, punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme, and, being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities 12 Whereupon as I journeyed to Damascus, with the authority and commission of the chief priests, 13 at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me 14 And, when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me, in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest 16 But arise, and stand upon thy feet for to this end I have appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness, both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee, 17 delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, 18 to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness

to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Me 19 Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision 20 but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance 21 For this cause the Jews seized me in the temple, and assayed to kill me 22 Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day, testifying, both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come 23 how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he, first by the resurrection of the dead, should proclaim light, both to the people and to the Gentiles

24 And, as he thus made his defence, Festus said, with a loud voice, Paul, thou art mad, thy much learning is turning thee mad 25 But Paul saith, I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but speak forth words of truth and soberness 26 For the king knoweth of these things, unto whom also I speak freely for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him, for this hath not been done in a corner 27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest 28 And Agrippa said unto Paul, With but little persuasion, thou wouldest fain make me a Christian 29 And Paul said, I would to God, that, whether with little or with much not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds 30 And the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them 31 and when they had withdrawn, they spake one to another, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds 32 And Agrippa said unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar

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1 *The events leading up to the hearing,—vss 25 13–27* 2 *The testimony of the apostle,—vss 26 1–23* 3 *The effect of Paul's faithful witness,—vss 24–32*

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1 *The events leading up to the hearing,—vss 25 13–27*

Agrippa II and Bernice were son and daughter of that Herod, who sixteen years before had been smitten by the Almighty in the theater of Cæsarea. They were a profligate couple, and, while the rumors of their living together in shameless adultery are not regarded as altogether authentic, there was nothing in their characters or lives to discredit the report. Bernice was a sort of Jewish Cleopatra A woman of great personal beauty, her experience with husbands and paramours was equal to that of the Egyptian queen While yet a child she was betrothed to Mark, the son of the Jewish alabarch in Alexandria He died before the marriage was con-

summated. Shortly after she was married to Herod, king of Chalcis, by whom she became the mother of two sons She was left a widow before she was twenty years old, and went to live with Agrippa, her brother. To quiet the scandal of their living together, she was married to Polemo, king of Cilicia This union was of short duration; and she soon returned to her brother's palace. A few years later, in the Jewish war, she allied herself with the Roman side, and became the mistress of the commander, afterwards emperor, Vespasian, and later of his son Titus When fifty years old she went to Rome and sought in vain to renew her intimacy with Titus, now exalted to be sole emperor She and Agrippa spent their last days in retirement in the Imperial Capital.

It was after her separation from the king of Cilicia that Bernice and Agrippa visited Festus, to congratulate him on his accession to power as procurator of the province With all their profligacy, traditional in the Herodian house, they seemed to share the family instinct for some sort of religion, and curiosity about things occult and supernatural. When therefore the governor mentioned Paul, and dwelt upon the extreme bitterness of the Jews toward him, and that, so far as he could discover, the differences between them were concerning questions of their own religion, and "of one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive," their curiosity was excited, and Agrippa greatly desired to hear him. The governor was glad to give his visitors the opportunity to see and hear the noted prisoner, as he had reason to believe the king was well versed in the laws and customs of the Jewish people, and could help him in formulating the case, which he must soon forward, with the prisoner, to his royal master in Rome

So, on the next day the king and Bernice came, in all the pomp and trappings of royalty, attended by their host, the governor, and the chiliarchs of the army, and the chief men of the city, to the place of hearing It was probably the same place in which Herod Agrippa the Great had made his blasphemous speech, accepting divine honors, and being stricken to death by a divine hand. Into the presence of this brilliant assembly Paul is introduced by the governor, who declared before them all that he had not been able to discover that the prisoner had done anything worthy of death. It was a just and considerate introduction; and, as soon as

"Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself, the apostle stretched forth his hand and made his defense"

Verse 13 The contrast of Festus with Felix—Vs 19. The fact and the affirmation.—Vss 24-27 The character of Festus for justice and considerateness

Vss. 18-19 One Jesus.

I Merely as a human personage in this world's history, Jesus is great.
II Jesus is great, because he is the central subject of the entire Bible.
III. Also because of his great, his transcendent work of atonement and redemption
IV. Also in His person and nature as the incarnate Son of God
V. Also at this very moment (the hearing before Festus), He was, and is now, "Head over all things to the Church"
VI Also He is to be the Supreme and Final Judge and Awarder of the everlasting destinies of men and angels
VII Also because such is His connection with the laws and government and throne of God, that every human being in the world must of necessity sustain a personal relation to Him—(*Smith, Rev. Dr. J. Henry*)

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2 *The testimony of the apostle,—vss. 26:1-23.*

The exquisite courtesy of Paul's address can hardly escape the notice of even a superficial reader "I think myself happy, king Agrippa, that I am to make my defence before thee this day touching all the things whereof I am accused by the Jews, especially because thou art expert in all customs and questions, which are among the Jews." But the most noticeable fact about Paul's speech is the marked emphasis which he immediately proceeds to put upon the resurrection He is to be heard upon all the charges brought against him by the Jews. But it appears at once that the sum of all these charges centers in his teaching concerning the resurrection from the dead of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is to be observed that Paul is here speaking before a man who is an expert in the customs and expectations of the Jewish people, and also, as would seem, familiar with the notable events in the life of the prophet of Galilee, for the apostle assures Festus that "this hath not been done in a corner."

The course of Paul's testimony is not difficult to follow. The

promise, which God had made to their fathers, was the promise of a Messiah. To the fulfillment of this promise the children of Israel were looking,—"Unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain."

As to the fact, Paul's expectations had not differed from those of his Jewish brethren. But he had been led to see that the promised Messiah was to come as a suffering, dying and risen Redeemer This was the hope which Israel cherished They were mistaken as to the character and mission of their sovereign Lord and Deliverer. He himself cherished their hope, but with this explanation, that it was the glorious hope of a Messiah-Saviour And for this hope he was a prisoner in bonds, and stood before the king and governor to be judged,—the hope of eternal salvation through a once crucified, dead, and buried, but now risen and exalted Saviour

The death and resurrection of the Christ being thus an essential article of his belief, Paul proceeds to give his solemn testimony to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, in a plain, unvarnished story of his conversion, through the appearance to him of that risen and glorified Jesus on the way to Damascus. This was not an egotistical thing for Paul to do, and, in the presence of such profligate and scoffing auditors, it called for moral courage of the highest order What he had been as a persecutor of the Nazarenes, and what he had now become as an untiring preacher of the faith he had once destroyed, were well known to his accusers, and perhaps to Agrippa Such an event must have had an adequate cause That adequate cause was to be found only in the certainty of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth This therefore, as a faithful witness, the apostle proclaimed.

In thus preaching a risen Saviour, Paul claims that he did nothing at variance with the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. He thus anticipates and answers the charge often brought against the early disciples He could not be justly accused of introducing "an unlawful religion" His was the old Hebrew faith, that for many years had been admitted to lawful standing among the religions of the empire. "Having therefore," he continues, "obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come, how that the Christ must suffer, and how that He first by the resurrection of the dead

should proclaim light both to the people and the Gentiles." He thus emphasizes the fact that Moses and the prophets taught what he, following in their footsteps, also taught, and to these two things,—their teaching on the death and on the resurrection of the Messiah,—he had added a third cardinal truth, upon the basis of the testimony of the witnesses, among whom he now numbers himself, viz —that Jesus of Nazareth was that preappointed suffering, risen, and glorified Messiah!

This is Paul's second rehearsal of the story of the heavenly vision It accords substantially with his testimony on the castle-stairs, and with Luke's narrative of the persecutor's conversion. The story of the prisoner in Cæsarea gives in more detail the risen Lord's words to the arrested persecutor His new Master outlines what he is to be taught more at length by Ananias in Damascus,— "Arise, and stand upon thy feet; for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darknss to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me"

Verses 4-5 The appeal of a good man to the record of his life.

Vss 6-7 THE HOPE OF THE PROMISE.

I The Jews' mistaken view of it
II Paul's spiritual insight of it
III The apostle on trial for his view of it

Vss 8-9 THE CREDIBILITY OF THE RESURRECTION.

I. The supernatural forces involved in it
II. The convincing testimony establishing it

Vs 8 THE RESURRECTION CREDIBLE.

I Let us look this difficulty in the face
II Let us seek to remove the difficulty.
III. Let us consider our relation to this truth

(*Spurgeon, Rev. Charles H.*)

Vss 10–15 Paul's Conversion.

I The malignity and violence of the Pauline persecution.
II. The radical revolution in Paul's character and life
III. The overwhelming demonstration herein of the truth of Christianity.

Vs. 18. The Apostle's Commission.

I. Opening blinded eyes
II. The saving turning
III The remission of sins
IV. The heavenly inheritance
V. The sanctifying of faith

Vs 18 Faith in Christ.

I. The object of faith
II Nature and essence of the act of faith
III. The power of faith
IV. The guilt and criminality of unbelief —(*Maclaren, Rev Dr Alexander*)

Vs 18 Christ's Last Gospel Message.

I To open their eyes
II. To turn them from darkness to light
III To turn them from the power of Satan unto God
IV That they may receive forgiveness of sins
V. And an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in me —(*Clow, Rev W M, B D*)

Vs 20 Paul's Preaching

I. The widespread audience
II The fundamental truths.

Vss 22–23 The Pauline Testimony.

I. Through Divine help
II. Before all classes of men
III Conforming to Old Testament teaching
IV Emphasizing Christ's sufferings and resurrection

Vs 19. Visions and Obedience.

I. Visions
II. Obedience
III. The rewards of obedience —(*Hastings, Rev. Dr. James.*)

Vs 23 RESURRECTION

I How are we between our body's dissolution and its resurrection?
II What is the style of our resurrection body?

(*Crosby, Rev Dr Howard.*)

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3. *The effect of Paul's faithful witness,—vss. 24–32.*

It was a noble defence and testimony to the truth In the time and circumstances of the hearing,—in the distinguished personnel of the prisoner's audience,—in the belief-compelling elements of his story,—in the wide scope of his testimony, and suggestive revelation of the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures,—and in the fullness of the salvation he proclaims,—in all these and other particulars, this defence of the missionary apostle before King Agrippa, apart even from its inspiration, takes rank among the noblest of the Christian apologies

The immediate result was disappointing There was, indeed, a unanimous judgment among the grandees of the realm that Paul was guiltless of any conduct requiring the cognizance of the law, and that, but for his appeal to the Emperor, he might at once be set at liberty As to any permanent influence upon those to whom he spake, Paul's words were like rain upon adamant To the governor the preacher's earnest words seem but the ravings of a maniac, while the sin-hardened and profligate king waved him aside with mocking incredulity,—"You must think a very little will make me a Christian" And the sitting terminates with the apostle's noble and Christian prayer, "I would to God that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds"

Verse 24 The Spirit-filled man will often seem beside himself to the men of the world—Vss 31–32 Men of clear views as to human rights are often strangely obtuse as to the justice of Divine claims

Vss. 24–28 WHY FAITHFUL PREACHING IS OFTEN INEFFECTIVE.

I Illustrated in the case of Festus
II Illustrated in the case of Agrippa

Vs 28. Gospel Truth

I The mighty energy of Gospel truth
II. The sublime aim of Gospel truth
III The practical method of Gospel truth
IV The solemn failure of Gospel truth—(*The Homilist*)

Vs 29 The Philanthropy of the Apostle Paul

I Paul's character
II Paul's circumstances.
III Paul's wish—(*The Homilist*)

Vs 25 A Defence of Religious Enthusiasm

I. The first ingredient of it is a deep sense of eternity in the heart
II The second is a deep sense of God leading him who has it to do all things to His glory
III The third is a fearless and consistent adherence to the language, and the doctrines, and morality of the Bible
(*Chalmers, Rev Dr Thomas*)

Section 8—*While Journeying to Rome,—vss 27 1——28 16*

1 And when it was determined that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan band 2 And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail unto the places on the coast of Asia, we put to sea, Aristarchus, a Macedonian, of Thessalonica, being with us 3 And the next day we touched at Sidon and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go unto his friends and refresh himself 4 And, putting to sea from thence, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary 5 And when we had sailed across the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia 6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy, and he put us therein 7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and were come with difficulty over against Cnidus, the wind not further suffering us, we sailed under the lee of Crete, over against Salmone, 8 and, with difficulty, coasting along it, we came unto a certain place, called Fair Havens, nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea

9 And when much time was spent, and the voyage was now dangerous, because the Fast was now already gone by, Paul admonished them, 10 and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the lading and the ship, but also of our lives 11 But the centurion gave more heed to the master and the owner of the ship than to

those things which were spoken by Paul 12 And, because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to put to sea from thence, if by any means they could reach Phœnix, and winter there, which is a haven of Crete, looking northeast and southeast 13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close in shore

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1. Difficult sailing,—vss 1-8 2 Stormy weather,—vss 9-13

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1. *Difficult sailing,—vss. 1-8.*

It is worth our while to note the time of Paul's journey to Rome We may reckon his two years' detention in Cæsarea as beginning about the 1st of June, A D 58,—as his hearing before Felix occurred less than two weeks after his arrival in Jerusalem, from his third missionary journey, which, we have seen reason to believe, was on the 17th of May of that year His hearing before Festus therefore, and his subsequent testimony in the presence of Agrippa and Bernice, probably took place some time in the mid-summer of the year A D 60 If these conjectures be correct (and as to the year they are only conjectures) the voyage to Rome must have begun in the late summer of that year, A. D. 60 Whether or not this was the year, we are warranted by the sacred narrative in believing that, some time in August or early September, Julius with his prisoners embarked at Cæsarea and set sail for Rome Touching at Sidon, and keeping to the right of the island of Cyprus to land at Myra on the coast of Lycia, in the near vicinity of Patara, their course was not an unfamiliar one to Paul As far as these shores they were for the most part doubling on the track of his last return voyage

That return journey seems to have been accomplished in comparative ease and safety, the prevailing northwest winds speeding them on their way But now the autumn sailing in the opposite direction is more tedious and difficult, encountering the same winds now adverse to their purpose The ship on which they had embarked had cleared for Adramyttium, its home port, lying on the western coast of Asia not far from Troy. And it is possible, as some suppose, that it was Julius' original intention to go all the

way to Adramyttium, and thence cross over via Troy to Philippi, and go the rest of the journey by the Via Egnatia,—thus avoiding a long winter voyage. But for some reason, changing his plan, the centurion was obliged to transfer his prisoners to another vessel at Myra; and happily found one in port from Alexandria, whose destination was Italy, on which they continued their voyage The captain of this vessel coasted along the southern shore of Lycia as far as Cnidus; but here he encountered the strong northwest winds blowing down the Ægean Sea, and was unable to make any headway in a directly western course. So he turned his ship to the southwest, and sought the shelter of the lee shores of Crete.

One bright spot is to be seen in this opening section of Luke's story of the voyage;—that is the centurion's courteous treatment of the apostle and his companions. At Sidon, Julius gave him permission to go ashore; and doubtless accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus, he visited the brethren, and was much refreshed Very different would have been his experience, had he been in the hands of his embittered fellow-countrymen But the kindness of friends could not make Paul's journey to Rome anything but a trial, and soon his faith and patience were to be sorely tested

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2. *Stormy weather,—vss 9–13.*

The navigation of the Mediterranean in Paul's day was suspended, in large measure, during the winter months,—the period of activity on the sea running from the middle of March to the middle of November. For coasting vessels it was regarded as venturesome as early as the autumnal equinox The larger ships, engaged in the grain-carrying trade from Egypt to Italy, could ordinarily continue in business, with some risk indeed, till the close of navigation.

Such was the vessel in which the centurion had chosen to convey his prisoners to Italy But, even with so large a vessel, it required expert seamanship to carry it safely against the rising winds and turbulent seas The captain was glad to take advantage of the sheltering shore of the large island of Crete: and, keeping close in shore, which he could safely do in a northwest wind, he brought his vessel to the indifferent harbor of Fair Havens. The

question here arose whether to winter at Fair Havens, or try to sail forty miles further west, and take advantage of the more secure harbor of Phœnix It was after the equinox, which that year occurred on the 24th of September, and they were justified in expecting an increasingly stormy season Some, therefore, thought they should stay where they were, even though Fair Havens was not as commodious a haven as Phœnix. Of this number was the prisoner Paul, who forewarned the authorities on board of the impending injury and loss The prisoner had not yet gained that ascendancy over his fellow-voyagers which he acquired a few days later, and his judgment was overruled He had probably had more experience in the navigation of the eastern Mediterranean, with his many voyages and three shipwrecks, than any of them· but the captain carried Julius and the ship's officers with him in the determination to run the risk, and if possible reach Phœnix, where they would find a safe harbor in all kinds of weather "The port was formed by an island lying in front of it, and having two entrances looking respectively to the southeast and northeast"—(Lewin.)

After some delay the wind came on to blow softly from the south They yielded to its gentle solicitation, lifted their anchor, unfurled their sails, and pointed the vessel's prow into the western sea It was a fatal decision.

Verse 3 The character of Julius —Compare the character of other Roman officers —Vs 21 Paul's friendly interest in the voyage and voyagers — a prisoner would naturally be unconcerned and silent, not so the prisoner from Cæsarea

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General Reflections on the Voyage to Rome.

1 The omissions and insertions of the inspired record are often inexplicable, but not accidental The entire antediluvian history is comprehended in one hundred and fifty verses, and nearly half as many are taken up with the story of getting a wife for Isaac. Three verses tell the story of Paul's second visit to Europe; and fifty-seven are needed for the record of this voyage from Cæsarea to Puteoli.

2. This voyage shows how truly and wonderfully, yet strangely,

God often answers prayer For many years Paul had wanted to visit Rome · but it had never been in his thought to have his desire fulfilled at the expense of the Roman government

3 A sea voyage is often a revelation of character We sometimes think less of those with whom we have crossed the ocean than we did before the voyage. Paul grew constantly in the esteem and confidence of his fellow-voyagers from the beginning.

SUB-SECTION 2 —*The Tempest,—vss 14–38*

14 But, after no long time, there beat down from it a tempestuous wind, which is called Euraquilo 15 and when the ship was caught, and it could not face the wind, we gave way to it, and were driven 16 And, running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were able, with difficulty, to secure the boat 17 and when they had hoisted it up, they used helps, undergirding the ship, and, fearing lest they should be cast upon the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and so were driven 18 And, as we labored exceedingly with the storm, the next day they began to throw the freight overboard, 19 and the third day they cast out with their own hands the tackling of the ship 20 And when neither sun nor stars shone upon us for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was now taken away

21 And, when they had been long without food, then Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have set sail from Crete, and have gotten this injury and loss 22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship 23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am whom also I serve, 24 saying, Fear not, Paul, thou must stand before Cæsar and lo, God hath granted thee all them that sail with thee 25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken unto me 26 But we must be cast upon a certain island

27 But, when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven to and fro in the sea of Adria, about midnight the sailors surmised that they were drawing near to some country 28 and they sounded, and found twenty fathoms, and, after a little space, they sounded again, and found fifteen fathoms 29 And, fearing lest haply we should be cast ashore on the rocky ground, they let go four anchors from the stern, and wished for the day 30 And, as the sailors were seeking to flee out of the ship, and had lowered the boat into the sea, under color as though they would lay out anchors from the foreship, 31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off

33 And, while day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take some

food, saying, This is the fourteenth day that ye wait and continue fasting, having taken nothing 34 Wherefore I beseech you to take some food. for this is for your safety for there shall not a hair perish from the head of any of you 35 And when he had said this, and had taken bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he brake it and began to eat 36 Then were they all of good cheer, and themselves also took food 37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred, three score and sixteen souls 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea

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1 *Fighting the storm,—vss 14–20.* 2 *The apostle's encouragement,—vss 21–26* 3 *Frustrating the sailors' scheme,—vss 27–32* 4. *Getting strength for the emergency,—vss 33–38*

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1. *Fighting the storm,—vss 14–20*

The gentle southern breeze seems to have lulled the sailors into a feeling of unwarranted security, and they coasted along through the quiet waters, trailing the vessel's one boat behind them. Suddenly the scene changes A tempestuous gale,—the Euraquilo, —sweeps down upon them from the mountain ranges of northeastern Crete, as fiercely as the stormy winds rush down the wadies of Lebanon upon the low-lying sea of Galilee "The ship was caught, and could not face the wind," and so the navigators gave way to it, and were driven off their course toward the southwest This soon brought them under the lee shores of Cauda, or Clauda, as the little island is variously named Here, taking advantage of the quieter waters, they hoisted the boat on board, and passing cables around the hull of the ship to strengthen it against the wrenchings of the tempest, they made all possible preparations for weathering the gale They were fearful lest the northeast wind should blow them over into the shallow waters of Africa's sandy shore but the utmost they could do was, with storm-sail set, to keep the vessel scudding before the tempest in a more westerly course Meanwhile, that the ship might not sit so low in the sea, they began to throw overboard the freight and useless tackling But, with all their efforts, beneath the darkening skies, with no sun nor star to show them whither they were being driven, all hope of being finally saved was taken away

Vss. 14-26 IN THE TEMPEST.

I. Man's vain efforts
II. The hopeless look to the dark skies
III. The confident look beyond the stars

Vs 20 WRECKED, BUT NOT RECKLESS.

The cry of a despairing soul
I Sometimes we have been glad to hear that cry
II. Sometimes we have greatly deplored it
III. Sometimes we have sympathized with it

(*Spurgeon, Rev. Charles H.*)

Vs 29 LIFE A VOYAGE.

The conduct of men { I In the beginning / II In the progress / III At the end } of the voyage

(*The Homilist*)

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2. *The apostle's encouragement,—vss. 21–26.*

The awful distress and panicky condition of the nearly three hundred people on board can be imagined perhaps: who could describe it? Not less difficult would it be to express the effect of the Roman prisoner's words, and the Divine assurance of deliverance which came from his lips.

It is certainly an impressive picture which Luke sketches for us, in which Paul stands before that despairing company in the serenity of an unfaltering faith in the God of the sea and the storm,—the God to whom he belonged and whom he served, with the assurance that not one of them should perish, though the caverns of the deep seemed yawning to engulf them at any moment. Reminding them that they had brought this trouble upon themselves, he bids them, nevertheless, to be of good cheer,—"For there stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am, whom also I serve, saying, 'Fear not Paul; thou must stand before Cæsar. and lo, God hath granted thee all them that sail with thee' Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken unto me."

Verse 24. Paul's life on board was manifestly one of prayer· and his prayers were not for himself alone, but for his fellow-voyagers

Vs 23 RELATIONSHIP AND SERVICE.

I. Whose I am
II Whom I serve
III This is the Divine order

Vss 24–25. PAUL'S SHORT CREED

"I believe God,"—What it involved?—
I Confidence in God's care
II Trust in God's promise
III Assurance of answered prayer

Vss 23–24 PAUL'S FIFTH VISION.

I Paul as the teacher of Providence
II Paul as the servant of Divine Providence—(*The Homilist*)

Vs 23 GOD'S TRUE SERVANTS.

I Their essential character
II Their high privilege
III Their social value—(*The Homilist*)

Vss 23–24. PROVIDENCE.

I Providence will always accomplish its designs
II Frequently by unexpected and unlikely means
III Faith in Providence, instead of suppressing, will stimulate to exertion (*The Homilist*)

Vs 23 THE CHRISTIAN MAN GOD'S PROPERTY AND GOD'S SERVANT.

I God's property
(1) By creation.
(2) By sustenance
(3) By redemption.
II. God's servant.
(1) This service deep enough to control all our being.
(2) Abiding enough to continue through all our history
(3) Comprehensive enough to include all our life
(*The Homilist.*)

Vss 6–44 The Voyage of Life

I In the voyage of life we have a great variety in our contemporaries
II In the voyage of life the severest trials are common to all
III. In the voyage of life special communications from God are mercifully vouchsafed
IV In the voyage of life one morally great man, however poor, is of immense service to his contemporaries —(*The Homilist*)

Vs 24. Paul and Nero

I The contrast in their positions
II The contrast as to their intellectual endowments and accomplishments
III The contrast as to their affectional natures
IV The contrast as to their views of life and ambitions
V The chief difference between Paul and Nero was in their religious views and experiences
VI The contrast in their conduct in facing death

(*Cobern, Rev Dr C M*)

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3. *Frustrating the sailors' scheme,—vss. 27–32*

For two weeks they were driven before the tempest It was a fortnight of unalleviated anxiety But at last to the experienced judgment of the sailors their affairs were coming to a crisis Their quickened senses detected signs of their nearing land, and this was confirmed by the soundings It is now believed that the vessel was being driven into what in our time is known as St. Paul's Bay in the island of Malta On the south side of this bay a long ledge of rocks runs out toward the east It is thought that the sharp ears of the sailors caught the faint sound of the distant breakers beating on these rocks, inaudible though it was to a landsman's ears, because borne away by the wind that was driving them forward. Whatever it was, the time for action had come. To keep the vessel from being driven on the rocky shore, they cast out four anchors from the stern. To drop them from the bow would have swung the ship around with danger of swamping it, or of bringing the stern upon the hidden ledge Then, making believe that an anchor from the bow, the common place from which to cast anchors, would steady

the ship if carried far enough forward, the sailors prepared to lower the boat so as to carry the anchor out some distance ahead. They really meant, under cover of this device, to abandon the ship and reach the shore in the boat Paul's eye was quick enough to see through this sinister design, and he disclosed it to the centurion, at whose command the soldiers cut the boat adrift The sailors were then obliged to make common cause with their fellow-voyagers, and immediately set to work in the endeavor to beach the vessel on some sandy shore All this occurred during the fourteenth night since they left the harbor of Fair Havens During all this time, so great had been their anxiety and absorption in the perils of their situation, none of them had eaten any food

Vs 31 THE USE OF MEANS IN GOD'S PLANS.

I The safety of all on board had been guaranteed by the Divine promise
II If the sailors abandoned the ship the whole company would be lost

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4 *Getting strength for the emergency,—vss. 33–38.*

With the breaking of the day, it was evident to all that the critical moment had come, and while the land was in sight every one would need special strength if he would escape alive. Then Paul stood forth again, the God-appointed leader, though a prisoner What he had told them days ago was being fulfilled, and, renewing the assurance of the ultimate safety of all in the vessel, he exhorts them to use the means in their power necessary for securing that safety by strengthening their bodies with food Then he himself set the example, and when "he had taken bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he brake it and began to eat."

Paul's example was contagious The ship's company were cheered by his words and deeds, and began to eat, while the storm still beat upon them, and while happily the anchors continued to hold. Two hundred and seventy-six people took part in this final meal. They were abundantly fed, and made ready for the emergency which was now upon them

Verse 35 Faith is the spring of cheerfulness —Vs 35 Thanksgiving is possible under all circumstances —Vs 36 The contagion of an unwavering faith.

SUB-SECTION 3 —*The Wreck,—vss 39–44*

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land. but they perceived a certain bay with a beach, and they took counsel whether they could drive the ship upon it 40 And, casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea, at the same time loosing the bands of the rudders, and, hoisting up the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach

41 But, lighting upon a place where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the foreship struck and remained unmovable, but the stern began to break up by the violence of the waves 42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape. 43 But the centurion, desiring to save Paul, stayed them from their purpose, and commanded that they who could swim should cast themselves overboard, and get first to the land, 44 and the rest, some on planks, and some on other things from the ship. And so it came to pass, that they all escaped safe to the land

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1 *The ineffectual plan to beach the vessel,—vss. 39–40.* 2 *The breaking up of the ship, and the escape of all on board,—vss 41–44*

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1. *The ineffectual plan to beach the vessel,—vss 39–40*

The purpose of the sailors seemed to be now all that was left for them to do. As they neared the inner shores of the wide gulf, driven by the tempest, they discovered a smaller bay just before them, with a beach or sandy shore, into which it seemed entirely feasible to drive the prow of the vessel now disencumbered of all but its human freight. If they could do this, though the billows beat upon the rocks both to the right and to the left, it would be possible for all on board to step ashore with comparative ease and safety. So they cut the four anchors adrift, and loosed the rudder bands so that the two long oars (which served the purpose of rudders, one on each side of the stern, which had been lifted out of the way of the casting of the anchors) might be let down into the sea, and used to guide the ship on its final and perilous voyage It was more perilous than they supposed. As they neared the

shore the northern arm of the bay was seen to be an island, separated from the mainland by a narrow channel. Through this channel the waters rushed to meet and clash with the stronger current setting in through the wider entrance. No steersman could hold the ship to a prescribed course in this conflict of opposing seas; and, despite all efforts, before they could reach the shore, the vessel's prow seems to have stuck in a bank of mud, while the stern was at the mercy of the raging floods.

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2. *The breaking up of the ship, and the escape of all on board,— vss. 41-44.*

The end soon came. The vessel had been under a tremendous strain, driven before the tempest for over five hundred miles, and was well-nigh ready to fall to pieces, notwithstanding the sailors' undergirding, which was useless so long as the mainmast remained to serve as a lever to pry open the timbers of the center And under the merciless beating of the waves the entire vessel soon went to pieces.

The soldiers, true to their bloody vocation, or perhaps knowing that they would have to answer with their own lives for the escape of any committed to their trust, were minded to kill their prisoners. But the centurion was more humane than his subordinates, and he was particularly desirous to save Paul, for whom he had come to entertain the highest regard. He was willing, therefore, to take the risk of any getting away, and kept the soldiers from their barbarous purpose, and "commanded that they who could swim should cast themselves overboard, and get first to the land, and the rest, some on planks, and some on other things from the ship. And so it came to pass that they all escaped safe to land."

Verses 39-41. Human effort often fails, God's plan never does—Vs. 43. The risks of humane feelings and counsels. Julius would spare the lives of his prisoners, even if his own should be the forfeit.

SUB-SECTION 4—*The Stay in Malta,—vss. 28 1-10*

1 And when we were escaped, then we knew that the island was called Melita 2 And the barbarians showed us no common kindness, for they kindled a fire, and received us all, because of the present rain, and because of the cold 3 But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, a viper came out by reason of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous creature hanging from his hand, they said one to another, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet Justice hath not suffered to live 5 Howbeit he shook off the creature into the fire and took no harm 6 But they expected that he would have swollen or fallen down dead suddenly: but when they were long in expectation and beheld nothing amiss come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god

7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us, and entertained us three days courteously 8 And it was so, that the father of Publius lay sick of fever and dysentery unto whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and, laying his hands on him, healed him 9 And, when this was done, the rest also that had diseases in the island came, and were cured; 10 who also honored us with many honors, and when we sailed, they put on board such things as we needed.

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1. *Paul and the Maltese,—vss. 1-6.* 2. *Paul and Publius,—vss 7-10.*

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1. *Paul and the Maltese,—vss. 1-6.*

This, Paul's fourth shipwreck, seems to have occurred in the latter part of October. It was winter; and the voyagers, escaping the buffetings of the sea, must have suffered intensely from the cold The islanders were a hospitable people and showed the cast-a-ways no little kindness, and, first of all, kindled fires because of the cold and the rain Doubtless all hands were busy gathering fuel for the flames; and Paul was not behind the rest. In the bundle of sticks he gathered lay a viper, torpid from the cold, which was warmed to life by the heat of the fire, and fastened its deadly fangs upon Paul's hand. The natives knew the venomous character of the serpent, and confidently believed the apostle was a doomed man. No doubt he was a criminal, and though the waves had spared him, the avenger was still on his track, and Justice would not

suffer him to live. But Paul was under the protection of the risen Saviour's promise (Mark 16:18), and shook off the viper into the fire, and suffered no harm. It was a marvel to the onlookers, and when they saw that nothing amiss came to him, whereas they expected to see him fall down dead, they changed their minds and proclaimed him a god.

Verse 2 The effectual appeal of distress,—Vs 4. Hasty judgments are likely to be unjust—Vs 4. The universal belief in Nemesis

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2 *Paul and Publius,—vss 7–10.*

At the time of this shipwreck the island of Malta was under the jurisdiction of the Proprætor of Sicily, and was under the immediate control of his deputy, who was called the "Primate of the Maltese." Luke calls him the "chief man of the island" His name was Publius. Following the dictates of his humane nature, he shared the hospitable instincts of his people, and received and entertained the shipwrecked company with great courtesy. The cast-a-ways had naught with which to repay this universal kindness; but the centurion's prisoner was able to give the governor such return as he could have obtained nowhere else. The sick father is healed with prayer and the laying on of the apostle's hands Nor does the benign recompense end in the governor's household. "All that had diseases in the island came, and were cured" In this way God honored His servant, and made provision for his wants, and for all his fellow-voyagers. So, when they sailed away from Malta, they went on board with an abundant supply of all necessary things. It was a wonderful experience, that three months' sojourn among them of Paul and his Rome-ward bound fellow-travelers They honored the sojourners with many honors: and doubtless the seed of the Gospel planted in that island-home soon grew into a living Church of the risen Nazarene. "Indeed, if we may believe the ancient martyrologies, Publius himself became a convert, and was the first bishop of Malta."—(Lewin.)

Verse 7. The character and conduct of Publius,—another Roman officer of good repute—Vss 9–10. The ministry of healing then as now effectual in opening human hearts

SUB-SECTION 5—*The arrival in Rome,—vss. 11-16*

11 And after three months we set sail in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the island, whose sign was The Twin Brothers 12 And, touching at Syracuse, we tarried there three days 13 And from thence we made a circuit, and arrived at Rhegium and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli, 14 where we found brethren, and were entreated to tarry with them seven days, and so we came to Rome 15 And from thence the brethren, when they heard of us, came to meet us as far as the Market of Appius and the Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage 16 And when we entered into Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him

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1. *The voyage from Malta,—vss. 11-13* 2 *The land journey to Rome,—vss. 14-16*

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1. *The Voyage from Malta,—vss. 11-13*

The short winter of southern Italy was soon over, and after three months' sojourn in Malta, it was possible to resume the journey by sea with entire safety. It was probably early in February that Julius took passage for his prisoners and soldiers in another grain-vessel from Alexandria, bound for Puteoli in the bay of Naples, the usual landing-place for such merchandise destined for Rome. The ship, Luke tells us, bore the sign of the "Dioscuri," —"The Twin Brothers,"—"Castor and Pollux,"—the tutelary divinities of mariners.

A straight course a little east of north, of one hundred miles, brought them to Syracuse, the famous capital of Sicily, fallen from its ancient glory, but even in that day a large and flourishing commercial emporium. Here they tarried for three days, probably for purposes of trade, or possibly waiting for a favorable wind which should carry them safely through the straits of Messina. Sailing from Syracuse they were obliged to "fetch a compass" or make a circuit, in reaching Rhegium, the modern Reggio, the present capital of Calabria. This was probably to take advantage of the western winds, from which they were cut off at Syracuse by the high range of which Mt. Ætna is a part.

Remaining one day at Rhegium for a change of wind, they were soon favored with one from the south, which blew them through the famous strait, and safely past both Scylla and Charybdis, and carried them speedily onward over the one hundred and eighty-two miles from Rhegium to Puteoli, the destination of the vessel, and the end of the apostle's memorable voyage

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Verse 11 Not Castor and Pollux, but the God of the apostle, brought the second grain-ship to renowned Syracuse, through Scylla and Charybdis, and to beauteous Puteoli

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2. *The land-journey to Rome,—vss 14-16.*

The landing at Puteoli brought Paul into Italy,—the Italy he had longed to visit,—and at the most beauteous portion of its shores. To the left of the pier, on which he landed, lay the beautiful Baiæ, the famous seaside resort of the grandees of Rome, while on the right and around the promontory that separated this small bay from the larger one of Naples, of which it formed a part, towered Vesuvius, and at its base nestled the charming but wicked Pompeii, in less than twenty years doomed to an overwhelming destruction

But Paul was most interested in the little company of believers, whom he found in Puteoli. Yielding to their solicitations, and with the consent of the kind-hearted Julius, he tarried with them seven days We may well believe that during this period messengers were sent forward to Rome, to announce the coming of the Church's great leader

Then began, probably in February, the slow journey of one hundred and forty-one miles to the Imperial Capital Thirty-three miles from Puteoli they reached the famous Appian Way, on which they traveled the rest of the journey, with a possible use of the canal from Terrecina to Appii-Forum About sixty miles further on they came to the Forum or Market of Appius. Here a company of Christians from Rome met the great apostle, and at the Three Taverns, ten miles nearer the city, another company joined them And when Paul "saw them he thanked God, and took courage." His heart was touched by this evidence of the interest and devotion

of brethren, many of whose faces probably he had never seen in the flesh.

So he girded himself anew with strength for that last thirty-eight miles, and, entering the city by the Porta Capena, "so," says Luke, "we came to Rome,"—not as Paul had planned, but as Paul's gracious Master had willed The hand that had led him all the way led him still, and under Divine guidance Julius consigned his prisoner to the custody of the kind-hearted Burrhus, the Prefect of the Prætorian Guard, by whom "Paul was suffered to abide by himself, with the soldier that guarded him"

Vs. 14. "And so We Came to Rome."

I Life on shipboard
II Life in Malta
III Life on the Appian Way

Vs 14 Providence in Paul's Life.

I We have here the accomplishment of a long-cherished purpose
II It was a purpose accomplished in a very different way from what Paul expected
III Paul's entrance into Rome accomplished really all that he desired
(*Taylor, Rev. Dr William M.*)

Vs 14. Going to Rome

I God's way often not our way
II Difficulties safely passed over
III Gratitude for present mercies
IV Doing good under adverse circumstances

Vs 15 Soul-inspiration from Human Sympathy

I God's sympathy manifested through man's
II. The less may strengthen and inspire the greater.—(*The Homilist*)

Vs 15 The Meeting at Appii-forum

I Paul regarded it as an expression of the sympathy of the Christian Church in Rome
II. He regarded it as a token of God's providential care
III He regarded it as prophetic of the universal triumph of Christianity
(*The Homilist.*)

SECTION 9—*Life in Rome,—vss 17–31*

17 And it came to pass, that, after three days he called together those that were the chief of the Jews, and, when they were come together, he said unto them, I, brethren, though I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, yet was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Roman 18 who, when they had examined me, desired to set me at liberty, because there was no cause of death in me 19 But when the Jews spake against it I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar, not that I had aught whereof to accuse my nation 20 For this cause therefore did I entreat you to see and to speak with me for because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. 21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters from Judea concerning thee, nor did any of the brethren come hither and report or speak any harm of thee 22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest for, as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against

23 And, when they had appointed him a day, they came to him into his lodging in great number, to whom he expounded the matter, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening 24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved 25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah, the prophet, unto your fathers, 26 saying,

Go thou unto this people, and say,
By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand;
And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive
27 For this people's heart is waxed gross,
And their ears are dull of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed,
Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart,
And should turn again,
And I should heal them

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles they will also hear

30 And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him

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1 *A general survey of the situation,—vss 17–31* 2 *Paul's preliminary interview with the chief Jews of Rome,—vss 17–22* 3 *The apostle's formal address to his countrymen,—vss 23–28* 4 *Paul's two years' private ministry in Rome,—vss 30–31*

1. *A general survey of the situation,—vss. 17–31.*

If the chronology we have been following be correct (and at the utmost it can hardly be more than a year or two amiss), Paul reached Rome in the early spring of A. D. 61. Five years later the war broke out which filled Palestine with blood and mourning; and in three years more it ended in the overthrow of Jerusalem, and the utter extinction of the Jewish nationality. Even while Paul was yet a prisoner in Cæsarea, there were many indications of the impending conflict. The fanaticism of the Jews was bringing them into frequent collisions with their Roman rulers

In Rome itself the affairs of the rising faith had not yet reached their lowest and darkest culmination. Christianity had not yet, in the estimation of the ruling powers, become differentiated from the ancient faith of the Jewish people, and so far had escaped being branded as a "religio illicita,"—an unlawful religion. Nero was on the throne, a young man not yet thirty years of age He was under the influence of the humane Burrhus, Prefect of the Prætorians, and of the philosopher Seneca; and was yet to develop into that monster of cruelty and lust, which he became after the death of Seneca, and when the infamous Tigellinus had succeeded Burrhus in the Prefecture of the Guards Paul, therefore, was treated with great kindness and consideration, and had reason to hope that, whether his Jewish enemies appeared against him or not, he would be ultimately acquitted and released.

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2. *Paul's preliminary interview with the chief Jews of Rome,— vss 17–22.*

It was just in this juncture of affairs that the apostle was brought to Rome. Two companies of his fellow-disciples had met him *en route*, and doubtless in the city itself there was ready to greet him a larger number of those to whom he had written from Corinth three years before that masterpiece of inspired literature, known to us as "The Epistle to the Romans." But Paul's first thought, as he treads the streets of the great metropolis, is of his fellow-countrymen. And so, three days after his long journey is

ended, he sends for the heads of the House of Israel, to bring to them the glad tidings which he had proclaimed elsewhere. To disarm their prejudices, and conciliate their favor, he rehearses the story of his arrest and imprisonment, declaring to them,—as he had done to Agrippa, that for "the hope of Israel" he was a prisoner in chains,—"I, brethren, though I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, yet was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. who, when they had examined me, desired to set me at liberty, because there was no cause of death in me But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar, not that I had aught whereof to accuse my nation For this cause therefore did I entreat you to see and to speak with me for because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain"

By these conciliatory words Paul gained the end he desired, an interested hearing The Roman Jews had not heard anything about him either from letters or visitors,—which fact was probably due to Paul's case being lost sight of during his two years' detention in Cæsarea, and the absorption of his enemies in the critical affairs of their people in Palestine "But," said they, "we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest· for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against" So, on the appointed day, they gathered in great numbers to his lodgings to hear him.

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3. *The apostle's formal address to his countrymen,—vss. 23–28.*

Luke's narrative gives us in briefest lines a deeply interesting and pathetic picture of the veteran missionary, seated among his Hebrew kindred, with the scroll of the Old Testament evidently open upon his knee, and with them searching and finding in it the story of Redeeming Mercy.

In this last and solemn ministry to those, for whose salvation he had so recently written to Rome that he was filled with intensest longing, and could wish himself anathema from Christ, he is led along the two great lines of thought on which he had been accustomed to dwell in the synagogues of the Dispersion. He first of all "testifies the kingdom of God,"—manifestly explaining the true nature of the Messianic realm. That Messiah was to reign over a

redeemed humanity They were not mistaken in expecting that their promised Messiah would sit upon the throne of David But he was to reach that throne by the way of the Cross;—this they had overlooked The Messiah's death and resurrection were to precede his exaltation.

The apostle now seeks "to persuade" his Jewish brethren "concerning Jesus," and to convince them by the testimony of the witnesses that He was their long-looked-for Messiah, and that He had fulfilled in every way their own prophetic Scriptures. In setting forth this part of his theme, the apostle would necessarily dwell upon the salient features of the life of Jesus and the story of his ministry So he had done in other places. and here he rehearses what to many of his hearers may have been a familiar story And doubtless he placed special emphasis upon the suggestive accord of the life and work of the Nazarene with the prophecies of their revered Sacred Writings

That they might see the confirmation of this testimony he turned then to those Scriptures, and brought their cogent message to his countrymen "from the law of Moses," and "from the prophets,"—so earnest and thorough his search of the Sacred Oracles, that, well-nigh from dawn to dark, his message fell upon the ears of his brethren

Shall we be guilty of irreverence if we endeavor to traverse some of the lines of the apostle's thought? We may not, indeed, undertake to say what Paul said, but may be reasonably sure that no discussion of such a theme by such a man could have passed by the great chain of Messianic Scriptures, on which we rest to-day Beginning with the protevangelium of Eden (Gen 3:15), and dwelling on the promised Shiloh of the dying prophet-patriarch (Gen 49:10), and Balaam's "Star out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17), he would surely light on the text cited both by Peter (Acts 3:22) and Stephen (Acts 7 37), concerning the prophet like unto Moses, who was to arise from the bosom of Israel to teach them the way of the Lord, and whom they were enjoined to obey (Deut. 18:18–19).

Was this all that Paul could find in the law of Moses to support his case? If so, then surely his argument was inconclusive! The very soul of his contention must have been, as he declared before Agrippa, and in divers other places, that the Messiah was to be a sufferer He was to come as a sacrifice for sin,—to die, and

then to rise again Would he not then turn to that ancient sacrificial system, and find in the very Tabernacle itself a shadow and type of God dwelling in the midst of His people,—of Christ as "the light of the world," and "the bread of life," and "the mercy-seat" of His people, bloodsprinkled and glory-crowned, before which in the Holy of Holies the accepted worshipper, saved by blood, may henceforth safely bow? Would he not find, as John the Baptist had found, in the lamb of the daily oblation, and in the Paschal Lamb, a type of the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." Could he fail to remind them of the double sacrifice of the two birds, in the cleansing of the leper, where one rises from the very embrace of a bloody death, to fly away on joyful wing into the free air of heaven,—the offering in its entirety a suggestive and beautiful type of Him who died a bloody death, but rose a living messenger of life and salvation? Ah! how that old and seemingly dead law of Moses, to which they so fondly clung, must have burned and glowed with supernal fires, as the earnest and eloquent preacher collated its testimony to the Messiahship, and death and resurrection of the lowly Nazarene!

But Paul was only half-done He turns now from "the law of Moses" to "the prophets," and finds in them also conclusive evidence of the two great truths which he was teaching.

Jesus of Nazareth was born in the midst of supernatural circumstances in Bethlehem of Judea, according to their own prophet Micah (5 2) Through Him a fountain had been opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness, as had been foretold by their own Zechariah (13:1). It was Jesus the Christ of whom Isaiah spake,—"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" . "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." . "He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due. And they made His grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in His death" (53·4–5 and 8–9)

But it was this same Jesus the Christ, of whom David sang,— "Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption," (Psalm 16 10) And the song of Isaiah (9·6) has the same theme, as, in numbers so combined

and glorified in Handel's matchless oratorio, he sings, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"

We cannot affirm that this was the precise line of thought pursued by the apostle; but we may be reasonably sure that substantially these Scriptures were among those on which he dwelt, as, tracing the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, he went down with Him to the shadows of Gethsemane, and the darkness of the rock-hewn sepulchre, and rose with Him triumphant to the heights of life to die no more.

The argument must have grown under the master's hand to an overwhelming climax of persuasive and convincing power. There can hardly be a doubt that Paul himself felt that it was well-nigh irresistible, and that, if his Jewish kindred rejected it, they would be left absolutely without excuse And hence the awfully stern and solemn yet inexpressibly sad words with which, from Isaiah's prophecies, he turns henceforth to the Gentiles Some went forth from the prisoner's lodging, in the gloaming of that spring-time evening, believing; but others, and probably the larger number, continued unbelieving and disobedient, to whom Paul said,—"Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers,—

> 'Go thou unto this people and say,
> By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand;
> And seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive
> For this people's heart is waxed gross,
> And their ears are dull of hearing,
> And their eyes they have closed,
> Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes,
> And hear with their ears,
> And understand with their hearts,
> And should turn again,
> And I should heal them'

Be it known, therefore, unto you that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear."

Before the devotees of the synagogue in Corinth, and the Council in Jerusalem, and now to the Jews in Rome, Paul speaks his last and ineffectual words; and there is a pathetic sadness in his final

utterance here and there. He knew and had written that "a hardening in part had befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles were come in" But he sorrowed, nevertheless, over the judicial blinding of so many of his kindred And doubtless in this parting interview his great soul bows in the overwhelming grief, to which he had given expression three years before in his letter to the Church in Rome,—"I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart; for I could wish that I were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever, Amen."

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4. *Paul's two years' private ministry in Rome,—vss. 30–31.*

Luke's narrative closes abruptly,—no one can say why The apostle continued his ministry in Rome, but no more to his Hebrew kindred. For two years he awaited the adjudication of his cause. The result of the final hearing on his appeal is not certainly known Many things lead us to believe that Paul was acquitted and set free, and this is the all but universal judgment of those who have examined the matter But what is written alone remains, and this is the annalist's record,—"And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him"

Verse 17 "To the Jew first" was the rule of Paul's ministry, though he had been commissioned the apostle to the Gentiles—Vs 20 "The hope of Israel" was greatly misunderstood by Israel, but was, nevertheless, a precious reality—Vs 23 There were two great ideas in all Paul's preaching, especially to his Jewish kindred, as appears at Antioch, in Pisidia (13 32–38),—at Thessalonica (17 3),—at Rome (28 23),—and in his prison life (28 31),—these were. (1) The true nature of Messiah's kingdom, as involving the Cross before the Crown,—and (2) That Jesus of Nazareth was the prophesied Messiah.

CONCLUDING COROLLARIES.

1. A sane and reverent interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, as a record of testimony no less than a story of deeds, demonstrates the crowning place which the resurrection of Christ,—the fact itself, and its manifest relations and consequences,—holds in the Christian system. If this is gone, all is gone "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain."

2 The illumination of the Old Testament Scriptures furnished by this interpretation of Paul's ministry is immensely clarifying and of well-nigh infinite value It is impossible to understand and properly appreciate "The Testimony of the Witnesses," and especially "The Testimony of Paul the Prisoner," as given in the Acts of the Apostles, and put the Old Testament on the back shelf